



## DÚN LAOGHAIRE / RATHDOWN COMENIUS REGIO 'RESTORATIVE APPROACHES' PROGRAMME 2010-2011-A FORMATIVE EVALUATION

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# DÚN LAOGHAIRE / RATHDOWN COMENIUS REGIO 'RESTORATIVE APPROACHES' PROGRAMME

2010-2011



## A FORMATIVE EVALUATION

Dr. D A Wilson, Restorative Practices Programme. September 2011

THIS REPORT IS FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE

DÚN LAOGHAIRE/RATHDOWN COMENIUS REGIO  
'RESTORATIVE APPROACHES' PROGRAMME STEERING GROUP

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University of Ulster, Scottish Government, RAiL,

Restorative Practices Team.

## I. INTRODUCTION TO THIS FORMATIVE EVALUATION

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This is a formative evaluation on Year 1 of the above programme. This approach was taken for a variety of reasons:

The programme had not initiated a parallel research strategy due to funding limits;  
 The programme essentially was a beginning platform to seed a variety of responses in the restorative practices field;  
 The programme was, rightly, opportunistic and responsive to the energies and enthusiasms in the local area;  
 There was only a small amount of funding to support an evaluation initiative.

This evaluation only looks at the work of Dún Laoghaire / Rathdown Comenius Regio Project and sets out the results of an initial, mainly qualitative, independent evaluation into the first phase of the above project.

The project is currently centred on the concept of promoting restorative practices within a number of local schools, with parents and carers, with local community organisations, inter-professional colleagues and a variety of statutory agencies in the Dún Laoghaire /Rathdown region.

### **The aim of Dún Laoghaire/Rathdown Comenius Regio 'Restorative Approaches' Programme between 2010 and 2012 is:**

To employ restorative approaches to establish, maintain and strengthen relationships within school communities in Dún Laoghaire / Rathdown, and as a model of conflict management.

**The objectives of the programme**, edited from the joint Norfolk/Dublin Comenius Regio project application are:

### **To explore the use of restorative approaches and practices in the region through promoting:**

- Objective 1:** Models of good practice in schools, communities and specialist provisions.
- Objective 2:** Multi-agency and multi-disciplinary teams using the spectrum of restorative approaches across all settings where children live and learn
- Objective 3:** Structures that support the embedding of a restorative model across schools and communities.

## The initial report - 2010-2011

This initial report will seek to establish a baseline of the practice to date and the extent to which the project aim and objectives have been progressed. This is with a view to then agree a number of measures by which the actions of the second year will be critically reviewed and evaluated through:

- the current partners evaluating their own work from September 2011;
  - those measures and experiences that will be gathered by an evaluator;
  - other measures that will be within the record keeping of the Dublin Partnership.
- (See Section 5)

## Evaluation Methodology

The needs and rationale will be established as a context for looking at the aim of Dún Laoghaire / Rathdown Comenius Regio 'Restorative Practices' Programme. This will be linked to a description of the inputs in terms of human resource and organisational commitments.

Owing to the limited amount of evaluation time available this evaluation will focus on practice and not look at the financial variables.

The analysis will look at activities, outputs, outcomes and benefits from the experiences of the partners, participants and the record keeping within the **Dún Laoghaire/Rathdown Comenius Regio 'Restorative Practices' Programme**.

The analysis will then attempt to articulate the strategic impacts from the evidence before setting out the implications for the development of the programme beyond 2012.

The issue of relevance will be especially important in the context of promoting a restorative practice initiative at a time of decreasing public expenditure.

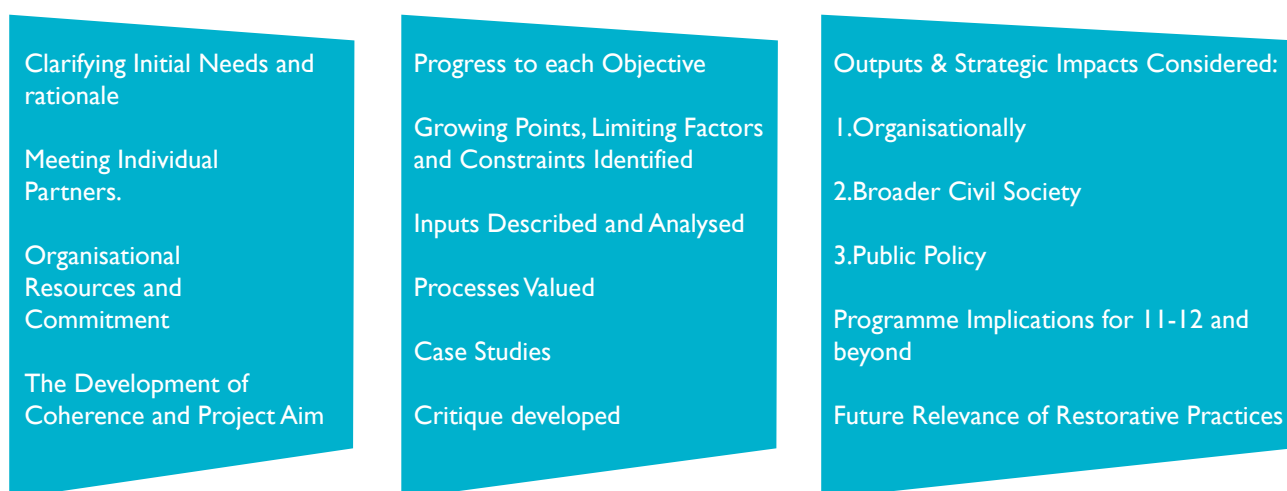


Figure 1: Progressive Elements of the Evaluation Process

A crucial component of this part of the review will be the nature and meaning of the 'learning community' developed by the Dún Laoghaire / Rathdown Comenius Regio 'Restorative Practices' Programme.

The approach will involve discrete elements of a case study nature and in-depth interviews with staff and other partners.

### Evaluation objectives

The evaluation will seek to develop an objective understanding of the Dún Laoghaire / Rathdown Comenius Regio 'Restorative Approaches' Programme by:

- Describing the activity and outputs of the actual practices associated with Comenius Restorative Practices (See Section 3);
- Giving an analytic account of the qualitative effects and processes of the work in terms of outputs, outcomes, issues and restorative challenges (See Section 3);
- Setting out the distinctive value added of Dún Laoghaire / Rathdown Comenius Regio 'Restorative Practices' Programme against each objective area (see Section 4);
- Identifying the implications for the strategic direction of the Dún Laoghaire /Rathdown Comenius Regio 'Restorative Practices' Programme for 2011-2012 ((see Section 5)

### Sources Utilised

The evaluation was carried out over a total of 12 days. 5 days interviews, site visits and meetings with diverse stakeholder representatives and seven days writing up the notes, reading, analysis of the material and critical reflection. A small grant from UCT to the School of Education enabled the evaluator<sup>2</sup> to be bought out of teaching responsibilities. This unique element of practice offered the Restorative Practices Programme team in the University of Ulster an opportunity to more fully understand an important Restorative Practices Approach in what had now become a priority area of work.

With	Number of Interviews	Meetings	Visits to:	Material
Principals (Primary)	3		4 primary Schools	1.3.11
Principals / VP (Post Primary)		3	3 Secondary Schools	2
Home school Liaison	2	3		2.6.
School Completion	2			2, 12
Counsellor	2			2, 12
Parents		10	1 Parents' Room	9
Teacher	1	3		
'Nurture Room & Equivalent' Staff	2	2	2 Special Supportive Units / Nurture Room	
VEC Youth Officer	1			5
Restorative Practices Trainers	2			7
Restorative Practices Reference Group		21 members		8
Education Centre Director	1		1 Teachers Centre	4
DL/R Partnership Project Co-Coordinator	1		1 Partnership Office	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17 Interviews</b>	<b>21 Additional people</b>	<b>12 Location Visits</b>	

Table 1: Tabulating the Interviews and meetings and Site Visits

NB: Owing to limited time and diary clashes I was unable to interview a Garda Sergeant who was a member of the Restorative practices Network (reference group).



### Key inputs into the programme at first glance appear to be:

- Human resources of expertise and knowledge;
- Financial;
- Staff;
- Voluntary commitment;
- Reach into advocacy and public policy;
- Additional leverage of resources secured in response to the Comenius Regio resource.

### Outputs and Outcomes

Outputs and Outcomes associated with this practice will be examined for the potential to make an effective contribution to the future development of Restorative Practices associated with schools within the area, and beyond.

This examination will seek to identify the distinctive outcomes from the **Dún Laoghaire/Rathdown Comenius Regio 'Restorative Practices' Programme** that give added value.

Linked to this, one of the key components of the evaluation will be to examine the processes through which the **Dún Laoghaire/Rathdown Comenius Regio 'Restorative Practices' Programme** works as a project. This will involve an analysis of the conceptual, methodological and practice based approaches of the organisation.

### Issues Emerging from the Analysis

The analysis will look for the extent to which Comenius Regio Restorative Practices is a relevant initiative in the context of:

- Promoting a restorative culture associated with schools and the communities they serve.
- The key skills, knowledge and best practice in Restorative Schools Approaches that are being accumulated.
- The key issues that are important for the development of the programme in the future against the background of whatever legislative, policy and 'common good' drivers exist locally and nationally.
- The Restorative Learning that has been accumulated.

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<sup>2</sup> **DERICK WILSON** is a Reader in Education specialising in community relations and restorative practices. He has been: a detached youth and community worker (70-73), a Principal Lecturer in Youth & Community Work (73-78); Director of the Corrymeela Reconciliation Centre (78-85) and then co-Director of a research and teaching programme 'Future Ways' (1989-2006), developing organizational change programmes with public and voluntary agencies around the policy parameters of Equity, Diversity and Interdependence. These principles became the base principles for 'A Shared Future' Policy (OFMDFM, 2005). He was Assistant Director of the UNESCO Centre at UU. He chaired the Youth Committee for Northern Ireland (1987-89), established with others Mill Strand Integrated School (1987), was a founder Trustee of the Spirit of Enniskillen Award Scheme, an Equality Commissioner and, more recently a member of the pilot Victims and Survivors Forum (2009-2011). He has been a member of the Corrymeela Community since 1965. His D Phil (1994) was a study of how difficult and sensitive discussions in a society in conflict could be facilitated, based on his own practice and the practice of colleagues.

## 2. NEEDS AND RATIONALE- THE INITIAL ACTIVITY OF THE 'RESTORATIVE PRACTICES' PROGRAMME

## 2. NEEDS AND RATIONALE- THE INITIAL ACTIVITY OF THE ‘RESTORATIVE PRACTICES’ PROGRAMME

### 2.1 The Development of the Dún Laoghaire / Rathdown ‘Restorative Approaches’ Programme

#### History - the impulses for this in terms of children and young people doing harm

From 2006-2010 Southside Partnership can trace a developmental initiative in Restorative Approaches in Schools (RAiS), initially with a focus on managing challenging behaviour in their school populations.

Seminal to this development were influences from the Youth Justice Board in GB, various Youth Justice initiatives in the Republic of Ireland and initiatives from Donegal Schools (March 2006). Additional interests were the need to address Behaviour Management Approaches, Promoting Positive Behaviour and Whole School Approaches.

Traces of the Donegal link remain both in terms of resources the programme draws on some and in some of the staff currently involved having been linked to earlier Donegal County Programmes in Restorative Schooling.

In 2006 there was a ‘cluster approach’ with 4 teachers in each school. This appeared to get diluted as only two schools joined the Comenius programme fully. This earlier cluster format may well be worth returning to for the next phase.

In 2007 a full list of restorative understandings and expectations are stated and while the primary focus remained on pupil behaviour there emerged a new strand on school policies and school, parents and community relationships.

In 2008 the development of a Whole School Approach using the Buncrana and Glenties approaches and other Irish examples were considered. All Principals of DEIS Schools were invited to engage with this broader approach. In this year there was also a move to promote restorative school approaches aligned with a more restorative culture being promoted by the local authority in civil society.

#### Establishing Southside Partnership Restorative Practices Network, initially based on the Schools and the Garda

In 2009 the Southside Partnership’s Restorative Practices Network was established and innovative links between schools and home school community liaison co-ordinators as well as school completion coordinators and garda promoted.

School completion, support for ‘at risk students’ in both Primary and Secondary level schools, support for teachers, parents and guardians were all included in the vision. In addition important links to a wider canvas were possible such as:

- CPD Development
- Youth Service Provision
- The Blackrock Education Centre.

The vision of Southside Partnership, its reach into diverse aspects of public and civil society organizations and the gravitas added by having an accessible Blackrock Education Centre ensured that a wider umbrella was cast over the initiative.

This joining up of a community development, regeneration driven public development agency with an education centre that offered a welcoming, adult reflective learning culture committed to enhancing the achievement of pupils, teachers and schools enabled diverse interests, voluntary and statutory; inter professional; criminal justice and community; to also join this network. This synergy should not be undervalued.

**NetCare Training was also engaged, having been involved with Norfolk and with a strong focus on the:**

- Skills needed to promote facilitation of Conferences and Circles
- Classroom disruption
- Pupil responsibility
- Civic responsibility

Reading the files for 2006-09 it is clear that the initial focus on addressing specific issues of harm being done was an understandable focus, more than a systemic focus on whole school relationships and culture. For this phase the focus was more on:

- Individual issues of harm rather than the organisational culture of schools;
- Techniques and sanctions more than relational schools.

The Co-Ordinator did see that stage as being more about social inclusion - to support the schools to find ways to hold on to the most at risk (and behaviourally difficult) pupils rather than suspending them – so that those young people were more likely to stay in school and sit exams.

It is clear that a valuable set of techniques and skills were being passed on to diverse interested practitioners although the underlying value base and theory for these approaches is not to the fore. This is normal with many imaginative new programmes.

The understandable use of consultants, in part caused by a failure of Universities to promote restorative practices as a core teaching strand, and in part because this practice has been carried by many knowledgeable consultants committed to the practice, may have possibly narrowed the approaches being taken.

## THE EMERGENCE OF THE DÚN LAOGHAIRE / RATHDOWN RESTORATIVE PRACTICES PROGRAMME

### OUTPUTS:

All in all, in the context of there being no strong teaching and research drive from RoI Universities, the different consulting individuals and diverse community partners did well in establishing an area of innovative and important practice in restorative practices in a society where not many central messages about the practice were being promoted by Government and other public bodies.

### OUTCOMES:

There was a strand of practice developing from this period focused on a more systemic approach and this takes time.

### ISSUES:

In the absence of public universities accrediting educational courses the theme of the practice being publicly accredited in some manner emerged.

### RESTORATIVE PRACTICE CHALLENGES

The need to move the work away from addressing issues as being primarily 'individual problems' to seeking more 'public remedies' and system responses developed.



## THE INTENDED ACTIVITY AND OUTPUTS ESTABLISHED BY THE NORFOLK - DUN LAOGHAIRE COMENIUS PARTNERSHIP 2010-12

### Evidence from reports furnished for the evaluation

In the beginning of the current year, the **Comenius Regio (EU) Project** (21st October 2010) was envisaged as offering:

#### **OUTPUTS: Training and Support through:**

- The introduction of restorative practices in school communities, in partnership with Norfolk schools;
- School communities as a whole, to enable the parents to bring issues to the fore and reflect on their response to conflict building on a base of a number of existing parent groups already in existence;
- Development of Post Primary as well as primary level initiatives

#### **Teacher training:**

- School-based courses on school planning days and summer courses.
- Consideration given to offering a longer course at a later date.
- Guidance counsellors and Home School teachers support.

**Interagency training** involving youth agencies, community groups and gardai.

#### **Resources**

It was intended to create short video resources.

The 'virtues' programme (a New Zealand Programme) in one partner school might be useful to promote to other schools.

Peer mediation training was also being offered by Norfolk.

**Parental training** was developed in a specific and very valuable course element.

#### **OUTCOMES:**

The emergence of the partnership

A restorative practices network was solidified and sustained.

There were developments in some very positive Garda contact. Parental confidence in the Garda had developed noticeably.

#### **The levels of reach in terms of the changes sought in:**

- School Practice
- School Culture
- Parental Engagement
- Wider Civic interest
- Wider Inter professional Engagements

**Practitioner visits** were established with an exchange to Norfolk in December.

## ISSUES:

It appears that this initiative began with a focus being on the child / and young person and the harm they did, helping teachers to manage difficult behavior and building relationships locally at this stage. From the material made available it appears that the relationships between staff and organisational culture, initially, was less of a focus. It is not clear whether there was any wider discussion about the system and structures of the school, the family, local services and local community infrastructure at the beginning.

However the programme co-ordinator has clearly then developed a systemic agenda as practitioners have engaged. The understandable bias initially towards a more 'skills and technique' approach was driven because people wanted answers about ways of dealing with immediate conflict.

In common with experiences elsewhere<sup>3</sup>, this practice developed a focus on some wider critical perspectives and the need for some integrating theory linking harm, relationships, institutional culture and the wider societal challenges of supporting parents and carers within wider communities of support in addressing under achievement and challenging behaviours in some children and young people. Practitioners need enabled to develop a rigour within their own practice and be empowered to advocate the validity and value of restorative practices and restorative justice concepts locally, as well as regionally and nationally. At that time, there also were wider approaches such as Family Group Conferencing and Mediation being explored.

During this phase the reality of earthing a diverse Restorative Practices Programme within a Local Community Development Partnership in tandem with the local VEC should not structurally down-played. Through such a location it was, and continues to be, possible to link the broader theme of restorative practices into local authority provision in youth and community services, community recreation programmes and links with schooling and adult education. Potentially also the link between promoting a restorative culture and the well being of staff working in statutory and voluntary agencies is an additional leverage, perhaps yet to be more fully realised. The understandable demand by the Partnership for measurable outputs and outcomes, whilst seen by some to be an intrusion, at their best offers evidence links that may be used to secure budget lines and resources.

## RESTORATIVE PRACTICE CHALLENGES

It is now important that practitioners in schools and projects are given time and support by their management to: document their practice approaches; distil the learning they have developed from the interventions; and log the outcomes they have promoted in terms of relational ways of working and organisational policies and practices.

If this evidence would be available for Year 2, at least, the nature of the public and civic discussion about the value of restorative practices would be enhanced and advocates for it emboldened.

<sup>3</sup> See writers such as: Drewery, V. 2004, *Restorative Practices for Schools: A Resource*, 1st edn, School of Education, University of Waikato, Hamilton, N.Z.; Flanagan, H., 2010, *Restorative Approaches in Schools Guidance Document* 1st edn, Lancashire County Council, Lancashire.; Hendry, R. 2009, *Building and Restoring Respectful Relationships in Schools: A Guide to Restorative Practice*, Routledge, London.; Hopkins, B. 2004, *Just schools: a whole school approach to restorative justice*, Jessica Kingsley, London.; Morrison, B. 2007, *Restoring Safe School Communities-A whole school response to bullying, violence and alienation*, Annandale, NSW, The Federation Press.; Braithwaite, V., Ahmed, E., Morrison, B. & Reinhart, M. 2003, "Researching the Prospects for Restorative Justice Practice in Schools: The "Life at School Survey" 1996-99"; Cremin, H. 2007, *Peer Mediation: Citizenship and social inclusion revisited*, 1st edn, Open University Press., Buckingham.; Thorsborne, M and Vinegard, D (2004): 2004, *Restorative Practices in Schools*, 1st edn, Incentive Plus Publishing. Varnham, S. 2005, "Seeing things differently: restorative justice and school discipline", *Education and the Law*, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 87-104.

### 3.THE EVIDENCE GATHERED FROM SITE VISITS AND INTERVIEWS



### 3. THE EVIDENCE GATHERED FROM SITE VISITS AND INTERVIEWS

#### **An Analysis of the Effects and Processes of the Work Undertaken**

##### **Material 1: Principal 1**

One of the schools associated with the Programme has **277** pupils. The school has a high number of children with special educational needs and, regrettably, the levels of provision for these children is being hugely withdrawn in the current cuts.

The use of the term 'severe' in the diagnoses is now being used as a reason to include or exclude. A number of children have been diagnosed as having 'significant' learning needs and therefore cut out of support because the adjective 'severe' has not been attached.

Special Educational Need was guaranteed under the Education for Children with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act—that came about by parental challenge. It would seem now that, in the current cuts, there is a whittling away of this right and it may now have to be challenged by a legal challenge through the courts.

In the school the team of 8 FT and 1 PT Special Needs Assistants has been dramatically cut. - 2 have been discontinued and 2 are under appeal. There may be others—the school has also lost two teachers (Resource teachers for Travellers). The Home School Liaison teacher was replaced last year—the principal indicated that if the post had become vacant this year it would not have been replaced.

Temporary English as an additional language (EAL) teachers are also under threat.

#### **The Principal came to restorative practices when starting as a new Principal in this school.**

Through the Partnership introductory days the principal gained a sense that this approach was right for the term she would serve. The Principal is also involved for 20 days per year on secondment to LDS21 based in Ennis—a programme to train principals on taking up appointment.

Appointed from outside the school, the Principal has sought to promote a restorative school atmosphere and culture and realises that it is better to take a 10-year approach in this work to institutionally embed restorative ways and a new culture.

There are distinct challenges and objectives vis a vis the role of SMT in such a process that is different to the work needed in support of teaching staff and the SN Assistant staff group.

**The reach and the benefits of this approach were summed up in a very moving statement about the vision for the school:**

*“That every child is understood and valued,  
that every day they come into a space where they do not meet confrontation or are diminished.  
That the school is a space that accommodates all who come to it and their different educational needs;  
A space that differentiates them from others, where their individual needs are catered for by giving them  
appropriate individual attention; A school that does not move quickly to suspend any.”*

**When asked about the benefits of such a vision the answer was:**

*“To enable the children to move on into wider society. To ensure that there are less social problems; where children can deal with their sudden anger and emotions that get in the way of progress; where they can cope better with the difficulties they will face in the future, where parents are partners in the education of their children; where there is respect between parents and teachers and other community partners.”*

**There is a need for Restorative practices to be examined within the PGCE Culture as a significant element, especially when teaching is populated by so many middle class trainees who have little exposure to vulnerable young people.**

**Potential Strategic Developments flowing from this appeared to be:**

A link to IPPN-Irish Primary Principals Network-Leadership Development for Schools to establish if there is a possibility of having a 'Restorative Approaches in Schools' module in courses for Principals and for their annual conference as to whether there is an IPPN Conference insert presentation. Jan 2012-Pat Gough

In the Toraiocht –A One year Diploma the RAIS could be a Project identified for students to follow.  
In LDS21 contact Paddy Flood, the National Co-Ordinator within the SPD Unit

### **OUTPUTS:**

The development of a 'Nurture Room' within three months from attending an RP Information meeting and following this up with a visit to Dundalk.

Specific training for 4 staff in the development of a nurture room approach that is fundamentally restorative in nature.

Specific training in restorative practices for 8 staff.

The development of a critical mass-13- within a school of 23 staff and 8 Special needs Assistants.

### **OUTCOMES:**

The increased and committed buy in of Special Needs Assistants to the restorative agenda with children and families.

The provision of support to a child that for two years has been unable to communicate with mainstream children and, within two months, to experience that child becoming more open to and engaged with other children and adults.

The confidence and vision to start and stay with a change agenda around restorative approaches in a primary School because she now belongs to a network supporting Restorative practices.

The emergence of the voice of young and mid career staff. This voice is being increasingly exercised around the restorative agenda and specific actions with staff who previously had not exercised their voice in open staff settings.

An integrating of diverse, and previously unconnected approaches between 5 staff in the Nurture Room approach and 8 staff in the Junior School associated with restorative Approaches through the medium of Nurture room approaches and 'Incredible Years' approaches.

### **RESTORATIVE CHALLENGES:**

To promote relationships that heal, support, include, empower in situations where so many have been diminished is a deeply restorative task.

To create an inclusive culture and dedicated space for differential support to those most in need under one roof is a deeply restorative challenge.

To empower staff across disciplines and grades to act restoratively collectively is a major restorative challenge in leadership terms.

Fundamentally to create a school that addresses differentials of poverty and harm is, of itself, fundamentally restorative.

## Material 2: School Secondary Level:

### Home School Liaison and School Completion Staff along with Principal

This school has been an inclusive school. It has not used the term restorative justice yet is a deeply restorative school. This has to do with a number of elements:

- There has been an initiative deluge on schools, which have 'come and gone'. These diverse centrally driven initiatives have often demanded uncritical allegiance from staff instead of allowing staff to find a context specific response.
- The term restorative justice relates too much to a 'criminal justice genesis' rather than an 'educational rationale' for promoting relationships, sustaining relationships and putting them right if harm has been done.

### Four feeder schools serve this school, three having Home School Liaison Officers

In each feeder area there are '6 weekly' local meetings where a range of school providers, youth work, community providers, the Garda Juvenile Liaison team, and social services meet to share perspectives and look at how especially vulnerable young people are being supported or not.

### The school has a catchment dominated by:

- Middle class families with children designated as having Special Educational Needs;
- A large proportion of immigrant community children who are seen as very industrious and committed;
- Children from low economic backgrounds with special educational needs;
- Traveller children some of whom come from settled and integrated families locally and others coming from the active traveller groups.

In general, the young male travelers have tended to be very hard to engage and involve. The more troublesome incidents have gathered around the actions of the traveller males who display behaviours that are essentially antipathetic to the need to treat other marginal people as equals. Young Polish people and disabled young people are the focus for much of this harmful behaviour. There also is a tendency among this group to be abusive or dismissive of the teachers.

## OUTPUTS

At all times this team seeks to engage these boys in reflecting on their actions, with differing, and often disappointing, forms of response. However being a value led school, a significant result has been obtained this year in that they have taken a group through to Junior Cert (15) and are hopeful of placing them in a Leaving Cert (Applied) (16) that will take them to the school leaving age.

The training with Netcare and another Principal assisted a number of staff buy into the restorative approach and secured some internal traction. The training offered has been inspirational and the fact that the Garda have a capacity in this area, as well, sits alongside the internal work of the staff.

The freedom to allocate time from one experienced staff member to work with a specific group of boys.

The development of a school community that gives safe and inclusive access to vulnerable young people.

The children who have come have thrived-there is multiple evidence available.

The school has the IIRP card system.

## OUTCOMES

The new engagement with vulnerable students from diverse backgrounds.

The involved staff feel that the schools has a well-developed framework and are buying into the approach. The need is to create a way of being-an ethos that is open and accessible to all.

Restorative language is common place in the school but not all staff have opted into it. There are growing numbers of staff buying into this approach.

The relationship between the teaching staff, the Principal and Home School Liaison is good.

## ISSUES

In many experiences with these boys they refuse to engage and are the most challenging group. In essence there is a need to continually hold these boys to account when they challenge the place of those with Downes Syndrome and those who are from Poland.

The school culture demands that 'all deserve an opportunity.' The school has sought this through all before 16 having a chance and opportunity but realise that with the Traveller males this may, in itself, be a major landmark that is difficult to reach.

The school has a diverse mixture of young people from social backgrounds. Current policy on equality is not making special resources available for this group and this is proving hard.

There is a growing name for the school; outsiders have been welcomed, there is a distinct restorative culture although not named as that and the experience of outsiders to Ireland in this school has been largely very positive.

There is and has been a legacy factor in terms of the School interface with the community, through the work of the two staff.

There needs to be an overarching understanding of restorative practice that underpins a range of approaches (See Appendices for some examples).

A restorative ethos must be linked to specific areas of the curriculum as well such as personal and Social Education, health and Well Being, Religious Education, Citizenship.

There is a need for an area policy around schools being inclusive. Currently some schools, with full intakes, shift the burden of being inclusive on to other schools.

If, collectively, all the schools in the Borough signed up to a common approach to inclusion, there would not be so much pressure on those individual schools now that are really having to address the bulk of the inclusion challenge.

#### RESTORATIVE PRACTICE CHALLENGES DESCRIBED WERE

**Giving voice** to those who were silent; **Bringing degrees of order** to those who have been leading disordered lives; **Opening up relationships** for people who had been cut off from many open and trusting relationships. These are discrete and sharp examples of Howard Zehr's framework for restorative practices.

There is a need to underpin the co-working of the VEC, the Community Garda Youth Diversion Schemes and the Schools Sector through the restorative paradigm.

## Material 3: School Primary Principal

### The Development of the 'Restorative Practices' Programme

In this school the restorative challenges are immediate and obvious. The catchment of the school is children from one of the areas of highest deprivation in the area and yet the area is surrounded by areas of economic strength and opportunity.

#### The emergence of the partnership

Engagement with the partnership was opportune because it gave the Principal, as a principal in an area of deprivation, an opportunity to 'be talked down' from the sometimes major emotional and organisational challenges the principal of a school faces with any pupils having multiple needs.

In a time where many people say they have so little time, the day to day demands on a principal are immediate and bear down all the time. In the network, to date, the Principal belongs to a space where there is an opportunity to review the work and gain some connections with other principals and professionals around schooling.

The Network affirmed him as he gave space to a new and well regarded teacher to develop the 'virtues' programme-a NZ initiated programme that addresses behaviour. This programme enables the Principal to remain fixed on the restorative approach as being the only way forward for the school in order to equip children to grow up more confidently, be less driven by anxiety or fear and more open to develop their talents and abilities. This is in spite of so many having to fight against the odds against them in terms of poverty and limited life chances.

The term restorative is a term that is evocative. It carries the principal in a future direction. It is not a challenged or contested term for the Principal.

#### Over 6 years ago the current school emerged from the joining up of a junior school and a senior school.

A comfort enjoyed by the Junior Staff was that the children they had, if they were disruptive or difficult, moved on into the Senior School. This comfort blanket was removed from staff when the schools merged. In a sense those who were troublesome in the Junior School remained and potentially disrupted the Junior School atmosphere.

The challenge has been to move the school staff from being anxious about how they can contain and deal with older pupils.

## OUTPUTS

### **The distinctive 'value added' of the Restorative practices programme.**

The value added of the RESTORATIVE PRACTICES Network currently is not too obvious and yet to belong has been important. As the network envisages ways forward in the future there will be more benefits accruing to the membership of this partnership.

A major theme is going to be the extent to which the culture of Second Level schools the pupils go to will change and become more restorative.

The growth of the Virtues programme alone has been important for the school because It has defused a group of initially Year 5's that became Yr 6 and that now has been filtered into other lower age groups.

## OUTCOMES

**In two years time** the opportunity to imagine the school being able to develop a culture of everyone becoming more responsible for their actions.

The opportunity for all concerned in the school to take responsibility for:

dealing with upsets that emerge in school or with pupils and colleagues;  
dealing with issues as they arise in as much as they are able;  
making the school a safe place for all;  
building the resources and capacity of all to make relationships, and sustain them (see the Scottish Restorative school themes on relationships work) and, where they occur and, if necessary, resolve conflicts.

The principal hopes that his students are, and will be, more likely to stand up and speak for what they need; advocating for themselves.

## ISSUES

Principals are central in terms of whether the restorative concept is promoted centrally within a school.

In a school facing children from areas of high deprivation each day the restorative vision can be very readily dimmed unless it is earthed and practical.

## RESTORATIVE CHALLENGES

One theme has to be why some schools are left to cater with more than their fair share of deprivation in a public school system.

A second theme is whether the additional resources given to such schools are, in fact, adequate in addressing inequity of provision.

The very existence of the restorative practices network is an instrument for restoring, nurturing and supporting people who wish to remain as teachers of children coming from areas of need.



## Material 4: Blackrock Education Centre

The Blackrock Education Centre has been an important learning bridge for the Restorative Practices Programme. The centre has a history of linking teaching practice, schools and the communities they serve with other professional disciplines. In equity terms it has been associated with promoting women into the workforce and addressing the social needs of vulnerable children and young people.

The Centre sees itself as a place that makes underpinning ideas and values practical in the lives of teachers and schools; children and their families. The work with restorative practices has enabled a concept that could have been marginalised and trivialised become central. With the potential to change the quality of the school experience for children, teachers, parents and managers, it has made a circle of meeting possible around this theme by offering a space to meet, reflect and promote the theme within broader educational practice.

In the experience of the centre the restorative work has grown in a way that did not seem possible earlier. It is now part of workshops with parents, teachers, managers, related professionals, children's units and other community initiatives.

In a time of cut backs the Centre has been able to assist the restorative agenda still gain traction because of its relevance to school attainment levels and school completion targets.

At this time teachers and school cultures are being changed by external agencies becoming involved and through increased parental engagement. Refreshing the curriculum is now a task more driven by the wider society and the education centre positions itself in this space of engagement. The role of the Centre is to persuade and influence those managers and teachers open to the new challenges of learning, especially for children and young people from areas of deprivation.

The ground is shifting because the challenge of school failure is starker now. If restorative work is fashioned around renewing vigour and well being<sup>4</sup> it is immensely relevant to the formation of new school cultures that give more opportunities for those who are vulnerable. The centre is a place that aggregates different good practices and encourages others to model such ways of working.

The Centre seeks to persuade people to develop restorative practices because it enables garda, parents, professionals and community development activists to meet together and engage on common issues.

The Centre enables teachers sometimes to play the lead and encourages them, at other times, to play second fiddle and learn from the practice of others. This is important if different professionals and agencies are to work together more.

The centre acts as a stimulus for the Principals Support Group-their existence has been significant to the whole initiative developing.

It also has acted in support of Youth at Risk Programmes and Care initiatives, holding the education of these young people to be a mainstream concern not a peripheral one.

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<sup>4</sup> Restorative is "the tendency to give new strength or vigour" (Jenkins, A., Shame, Realisation and Restitution - The Ethics of Restorative Practice, ANZJIT, Vol 27 Number 3 2006, pp153-162. "Making you feel strong, healthy, full of energy or happy again".

## OUTPUTS

A meeting space that legitimises all agencies and stakeholders to learn collaboratively and collegially has been established. The development of specific learning networks with Principals, Youth at Risk and Care groups is a new reality that underpins restorative practices locally.

Specific courses on Restorative Practices in Schools have been offered and taken up by considerable numbers of teachers and support agencies.

5 day CPD accredited summer course for teachers in Peer Mediation with a Norfolk Training Partner a 5 day CPD accredited summer course for teachers with Netcare

Restorative practice is now promoted as essential to being a good professional educator.

## OUTCOMES

The Centre is a major convening agency that underpins education, curriculum development, post qualification development and adult and community education.

The Centre is a major bridging structure between core education agencies and wider state and civil society actors with a child and young people focus.

Through the imprimatur of the Teachers Centre, Restorative Practices is now understood to be a mainstream practical programme of work, capable of enhancing educational attainment and supporting school completion targets.

The centre has legitimised circles of people to grow responsive new practices such as restorative practices in supporting the organic development of schools, giving people a voice they have often not used before and promoting common themes such as restorative practices, for diverse people and agencies to meet around.

Inter disciplinary and multi-agency working in favour of enhancing the provision offered to failing children and young people has now been given status.

Restorative practices are now thought of as being relevant and central to schools developing their standards and improving their organisational culture.

## ISSUES

A major issue is the need to bring teachers into a learning posture with other people, especially parents, community volunteers and community workers.

This practice works more by the force of good practice, by 'resonance' than by argument. Promoting and supporting clusters of practitioners working within and with schools is a priority.

## RESTORATIVE PRACTICE CHALLENGES

In view of the current Director leaving there is a need to ensure that the Restorative Practice priority is embedded within the development plan of the Teachers Centre.

One developmental growth point has been restorative practices that have developed with Garda support. Whilst very valuable it is also important that Garda interest is promoted around 'community safety and public wellbeing'

approaches primarily. It is important this is not just associated with specific problem children. Because of their historical standing in Irish society, were the Garda able to highlight Restorative Practices in terms of this wider agenda they would be assisting a major public attitude shift and making a major contribution to policy and civil society debate on this theme.

There may be an opportunity to insert restorative practices in the curriculum of PDST.

The restorative challenge has been to open up the debate about a narrowing of the curriculum with less emphasis on relationships and their potential to motivate deep learning.



## Material 5: Youth Service Provision and the Restorative Approach

The local VEC is unique because it is responsible for no primary or secondary schools. It is responsible for Third level Colleges and Youth Services yet the VEC is responsible for mainstream failure around school exclusions and withdrawals. The 'Out of School' Education Service was established in 2005 by Dun Laoghaire VEC in order to respond locally to the educational needs of young people at risk of or who have already left school early.

### Young People who have failed in School

A major restorative strand in working with young people who have failed in school structures appears to be that they failed in relationships with authority figures, not knowing how to cope. They need new relationships of a voluntary nature, such as with youth workers. In these relationships they still get challenged and held accountable yet they are worked with in a more open manner than some schools appear capable of.

Sporting organisations especially, because of their high status among many young people, have an often untapped potential to be more aligned with youth justice and restorative interventions. They are spaces where effort can be expended in making reparation for hurts caused yet also offer links and routes out of less productive behaviours.

### Young Women who have Failed

One major element for addressing this failure has been SportsReach but this did not reach some, or stop a number of young women, dropping out.

The priorities in the local Restorative Approaches Scheme emerged from establishing a pattern from a large number of isolated young people, many of them girls. The VEC sought to integrate the 'Out of School' education opportunities but there were few bridging options. When these young people were met by different agencies the young people came into different worlds where they did not know how to respond appropriately. They did not have the skill or social sophistication these agencies demanded of them and so were branded failures again.

People such as youth workers were and are able to work differently with them, inviting them to do activities only if they wished to. Youth workers work to a voluntary contract and this has a motivating potential other professionals sometimes do not understand. What has emerged now is a culture of out of school tutors and adult and community tutors and youth workers working to a new, voluntary agenda with these 'so called failures' in the school system. There is still a need to train the tutors to work in this new, more restorative manner. This is particularly addressed in the work of the Loughlinstown ALPP (Alternative Learning Pathways Project)

### Looked After Children and Young people are an emerging theme

There is a real need to attend to the needs of these children and young people and those working with them. Two central tasks are restorative in terms of nurturing new possibilities with the young people, as well as attending to the often conflicted relationships they get into with the very staff committed to their care.

There are opportunities to develop practice links with the Youth at Risk Network, promote better relationships with court officers and working within the Restorative Partnership with the VEC in supporting staff working in care settings, drawing on best practice in the UK, Ireland and elsewhere. There is also the potential to assist young people access Further Education opportunities, suitably supported.

## OUTPUTS

Netcare was able to offer these tutors a restorative practices day. However these tutors are hindered a little by the part time nature of their employment and the fact that, in a sense, they are, peripatetic.

Parental support links in some specific areas have been developed to address failures in school, in family and anti-social behaviours in the community. The VEC and Youth Service deliver 'dads and lads'-'mums and girls' programmes that are stepping stones on a restorative path.

The new relationships between Health, Care, Youth Services, Garda, In School and Out of School providers are an important model. The VEC have now freed tutors to work within Adult and Community education alongside targeted groups of young people identified by the local agencies and services.

## OUTCOMES

It is now possible to imagine a mentoring programme with these tutors to assist them develop this work.

Out of school- in school linkages are now being engaged. The potential of the Youth Service, Further Education and Out of School Education Service supports being integrated around a particular group of identified young people is being considered.

There is a need for school based staff, police, social workers and out of school providers to engage more because a small number of the same young people may be going round this system, being passed on but not connected with.

## ISSUES

The youth service is not at a stage yet where their programmes are evidencing change sufficiently to challenge public policy. The evidencing of change in this state of the parties may be a focus for the Restorative Partnership in this coming year.

The links to Education Welfare are developing and this is very positive.

Links to the National Welfare Board are now stronger but need developed still.

There are no overview systems emerging in relation to this group of young people. The restorative potential of this work is not completely understood within the network as yet.

If a wider linkage was established by the above inter-agency group (see outcomes) it would be possible to establish a dedicated programme for the 'readily identifiable core group' of young people who are consistently falling between the cracks and who could be supported, challenged and tracked across their social needs in terms of health, housing, education and accessing opportunities.



### RESTORATIVE PRACTICE CHALLENGES

It would be a major development if this work challenged all professionals to work to highest professional values, models of best practice and draw on relevant research. The Partnership could assist here.

The VEC and the Partnership have links to diverse political actors. There is the possibility of raising the awareness of restorative approaches and their value on a cross party, non-partisan basis as well as embedding these practices in the work of a local authority. Such public, political and civic engagement seems a prize worth working towards.



## Material 6: Home School Community Liaison Coordinators

Four HSCLC staff were interviewed and all expressed appreciation about being able to belong to a wider Restorative Practices Network reference group.

It is good to hear the experiences of other schools and to develop new ideas and connections. Belonging makes me think about the ways we all work; it is reassuring to hear others; it is refreshing to get my thinking challenged. Belonging reminds me of values and practices that I need to refresh myself on. (Home School Liaison Staff)

A central theme in their work is treating people respectfully. The restorative word names how they work and it feels right. It grounds their work. At the centre of their work is the wellbeing of children and families, often in areas where families have lived for generations.

The restorative umbrella offered space for their work to be linked with the wider work of the school. Although working with schools for some time, some felt that the schools sometimes still see them at a distance from the core tasks of the school, and this is a missed opportunity.

The group had a view that home school working was deeply restorative. They worked with people in a holistic manner. At the centre of this discussion was a request for the programme to be clearer about whether restorative practices was focused only on skills or whether it was around the wider school culture and the holistic working with families.

To belong to the Partnership was to be given challenges, refreshed, reminded about basic values in the work and also space to think.



## OUTPUTS

The staff were able to model placing the child at the centre of all their work and they facilitated school, parents and teachers engage around this focus.

A good practice model was shared about a homework club for 2nd and 3rd years.  
A group of parents had now formed a pod in support of this.

Care team meetings had now started with parents of pupils with special education needs being involved with Home School liaison and Teachers.

Certain events had now been developed just for parental empowerment.

There were now new 'parents only', peer development groups and teachers assist with recruitment. Parents are now being supported with housing, family conflicts and family tensions.

## OUTCOMES

There were possibilities emerging for greater parental participation in assisting with with reading and maths.

I had the opportunity to meet one such group and the level of insight and personal development was very high and very clearly articulated. A number of these parents spoke of how life changing the experience had been.

Home School liaison work has now become an established and valued provision.

## ISSUES

It seemed important that the status of the Home School Liaison was clarified vis a vis the teaching staff.  
A clear school structure is needed where each has their place, under the Principal's office.

With one exception all felt it easier to develop the practice outside the school walls and culture than within the school. They all had very valuable insights to offer to schools, should the schools create the space for such exchanges, on an empowered basis, to occur.

For the Home School tutors, teachers and parents were in need of engagement. They spoke about working primarily with families but believed they were less able to engage in a restorative manner between teachers and parents.

## RESTORATIVE PRACTICE CHALLENGES

That restorative practices need to be conceptualised more clearly, accommodating the informal and formal approaches and empowering many of their daily actions with parents, carers and children.

The tasks of class teaching and home school liaison need to be linked more through the Principal within the school structure.

Principals should consider convening such a structure, where it does not exist.

There are opportunities for the Home School Tutor to be mandated to assist teacher and parents meet over sensitive issues.



## Material 7: RESTORATIVE PRACTICES Training Support

**Netcare:** Over the past years an important support strand has been that offered by Netcare to schools, youth workers, Garda, parents and Principals.

### **From individual pupil support to a gradual ‘whole school emphasis’ to a regional / area approach.**

In 2007 the main thrust was on a pupil focus within schools. However from this there emerged a new strand on School Policies and school, parents and community.

In 2008 the development of a Whole School Approach using the Buncrana and other Irish examples was a further development. 2008 marked a drive into the local authority. All DEIS Principals were invited.

In 2009 the Southside Restorative Practices Network was established and this began to engage with School Completion and Home School liaison programmes as well.

**Norfolk Partnership:** Through a member of the partnership a five day course on ‘Peer Mediation’ was offered to 20 participants. Couched within a ‘restorative values’ laden approach, inviting staff to acknowledge the personal challenges this work posed for them as well as engage with promoting a whole school systemic restorative culture, this course was a most valuable additional element offered by the Partnership in 2011.

### **‘RESTORATIVE PRACTICES IN SCHOOLS’ SUPPORTS**

- The School Completion focus
- Support for most at risk students-Primary and Secondary
- Support for teachers, parents and guardians
- The Comenius Opportunity

## OUTPUTS

### The NetCare Training was focused on:

Skills needed to promote the facilitation of Conferences and Circles.

Classroom disruption.

Pupil Responsibility.

Civic responsibility.

## OUTCOMES

The above took place against a widening discussion about the system and structures of the school.

The relationships focus of this work: between staff; between school and parents; with staff and children; and between children were all in keeping with best practice and research emerging in this area.

## ISSUES

Whilst the approaches developed initially appeared to be very technique driven, an understandable stage, the challenge emerged about the need for some wider integrating theory. Netcare responded to this challenge, encouraging schools to engage with a system wide approach. This report will return to this theme later.

There also were influences coming from family group conferencing, youth justice diversion programmes and mediation approaches.

## RESTORATIVE CHALLENGES

There appears to be a need for a more defined and mandated role in supporting groups or agencies develop their restorative approaches within a uniting approach across the area.

## Material 8: Restorative Practices Reference Group Structure

I attended a meeting of the Reference Group. The Reference Group offers a space for a wide range of practitioners interested in restorative practices to gather together from agencies such as: School Support Programmes (1), Home School Liaison (5), Principals (4), School Completion programmes (4), Youth officer (1), Parenting programme (3) and Social Needs Support programmes-BSSN (1), Garda (1).

### **The value of belonging to the Restorative Practices Reference Group is captured by the voice of one participant:**

*“The work we are doing gets elevated and noticed more internally in my school by belonging to this reference group. There is an added value of belonging to the because:*

*It supports my belief in this approach;*

*It encourages me to work to work to restore relationships;*

*The young people destroyed in so many relationships that have gone wrong can be supported to start again; I feel jogged up and restored myself.*

*I get ideas. It places the work of the school in a wider context. It enables me and other staff to have more self belief; we get feedback on what we are trying to do that is helpful; we get affirmation and we know we are not alone.*

*Funding is minimal and yet to belong is to be in the vicinity of getting some access to resources; research and ideas for further developments.”*

This structure was commented upon favourably by all attending and a number later interviewed spoke about it being most useful.

Although the meeting always has a high attendance, the frequency of regular attenders was variable and this worked against a core vision and drive developing from this group. There is a strength gained from such a group appearing to have a voluntary attendance component to it. However one needs to ascertain if that is an honest position to describe such a group? If those in public employment or publicly supported agencies were attending in work time, at least there is an implicit mandate for that attendance.

### **If this was the case would there not be a stronger mandate for the group if it became more of a cross-sectoral Restorative Practice Development / Reference Group?**

If so then membership and attendance could be mandated and the learning from the group fed back into the working practices and cultures of the diverse agencies along with other developmental proposals.

### Resource Development and Promotion - A Future Task?

Opening up access to restorative approaches to children, young people, parents and teachers.

The development of resources to respond to parental needs; teacher support needs; children accessing restorative concepts that they could use; young people accessing similar resources.

This platform legitimised a range of restorative practice learning days for schools and others.

### Developmental Practices of a Restorative Nature with Parents

There was a possibility to incorporate an RESTORATIVE PRACTICES element into a major course with parents over three years involving DEIS Schools on Parenting and Personal Development, drawing on Home School liaison and Parent work. Year 1 is developing the understanding parent to parent and parent to pupil. Year 2 is seeking to communicate the leadership potential of the group membership in promoting the values of the course with other parents. Year Three is to be developed.

Communication Courses 'Parent to Child' are being developed further in Sallynoggin and Rathfarnham. Two National and two Secondary Schools are coming into explore evening class provision.

There is a personal development course for women with the VEC Adult Education literacy Programmes. Conflict Resolution approaches with children and parents are linked to Home School liaison work. There is an applied course for parents to assist them in their own development as well as support them with their children. There might be an opportunity to develop Restorative practices alongside this provision.

### Early Leaver provision

Bringing in a Restorative Practices module into the local early school leavers programme (ALPP) is planned.

### Restorative Approaches with Children in Care<sup>5</sup>

There is a potential for children in residential settings to engage with the restorative theme along with the Garda, Youth Workers and the CPD.

### The main obstacles people identified were Finding the Time.

Finding the right people as facilitators and convincing people of the value of the work. There is a great need to engage with staff, children and parents in promoting this practice.

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<sup>5</sup> Hopkins, J., (2009) Just Care, - Restorative Approaches to Working with Children in Care, Jessica Kingsley Books.

### **Reflective Practice Discussions identified:**

Returning to the central restorative themes members spoke about:

- Anger and rage are themes many people are confronted with by parents and children
- How children and young people develop a sense of belonging and connectedness.
- How can they be encouraged to invest in relationships?

### **The adults create the spaces or limit the spaces into which the young people come.**

- Some believed it was about the needs of teachers and parents first.
- We need to look at the experiences before us and ask “what is happening?”
- How do people in today’s world develop a sense of self-esteem?
- What communication systems do they use?

### **Parental Reflection and Confidence**

Parental empathy is being expressed in what manner?

Stress management is something many demand.

Space to observe self and problem solve is needed.

### **Investing time in developing restorative relational cultures in schools**

A guidance counsellor spoke of how they and the Vice principal created a critical mass in the school and how people could use SPHE to establish base rules such as no put downs and promote inter generational working. The teacher saw the curriculum, the daily conflicts and school relationships as places for Restorative practices to be applied.

We agreed on the value of schools giving this theme time. Building schools based on a new quality of relationships adds to a better working atmosphere with less time wasted in conflictual ways down the line. We agreed that adults and young people had to work together more.

### **Whole School Approaches are best**

Practice models were identified where conflicts are resolved on a daily basis in a secondary school and conflicts between staff and pupils are resolved and consequences are faced.

Teacher and children are never equal-they can be respectful but always different.

Some schools spoke about some teachers and children gradually speaking in ‘the first voice’-sharing how they feel as well as how they think. First voice is personal, engaged and factual.

**Garda:**

The statutory duty placed on Garda to link with schools could be used more to strengthen community, school and Garda links.

Under force orders the Garda have to visit schools 3 times per year at Primary School level

They have 7-8 topics to examine such as bullying; public order; reparation; community safety'.

There is potential for development here that would underpin restorative ways.

**The Childhood Development Initiative in Tallaght is a potential linkage- Marian Quinn.****Nurture Room practices were shared but local learning needs enhanced<sup>6</sup>.**

There is scope in the National Behaviour programme to develop these facilities as part of restorative approaches. This psychologist led programme, pioneered by Paul Cooper, is to assist people learn in areas where emotion and attachment challenges get in the way of deep learning.

Run under the National Youth Programme with trained therapists and social psychologists it has been going for 6 Years already and is allied to the school and the neighbouring estate.

**OUTPUTS****Five day peer mediation course in July**

- 1 day for Secondary Schools
- Training for Schools Work in Restorative Practices Steering Group to look at:

**Restorative Resources**

The Development of a diffused model of restorative practice development within a local Secondary School is being examined by Senior Staff and Home School Liaison Officers in several schools.

**OUTCOMES**

Staff from care teams and schools are developing restorative practices in common.

There is an opportunity for some coherent and continuing reflective practice group of staff to promote the value of conferencing across the school.

There is an opportunity to develop forms of practice that might be useful to parent and teachers groups around transition points and transfer ages. There is a web site access on this. [www.nbss.ie](http://www.nbss.ie)

There is an opportunity for Blackrock Education Centre to develop a reflective practitioners group and promote a learning cluster around working with staff and children and young people.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/schools/nurture-groups-can-they-prevent-bad-behaviour-in-the-classroom>

## ISSUES

I was able to see three other 'nurture initiatives' in the area by partners in the Reference group but these were not known about in the group. It is important that the actions of local partners are shared, valued and affirmed-often initiatives of high quality locally are undervalued.

Driving Positive Behaviour could be a lever for embedding restorative approaches by offering staff courses that enable staff to use this approach in the hours allocated in the recent teachers agreement.

## RESTORATIVE CHALLENGES

Whole school approaches were mentioned but not evidenced.

There needs to be a generic approach allied to distinctive sessions for primary and secondary teachers.

The potential exists to develop a learning cluster of staff from diverse but connected schools in the area.

A memorandum could be developed challenging schools in an area to work to certain values, promote certain agreed standards of behavior, address exclusions on an area basis and challenge a culture of 'difficult children' being passed on. (See [www.SHARES.co.uk](http://www.SHARES.co.uk)-. The Lancashire based schools consortium)

Information evenings for parents could evolve into a RESTORATIVE PRACTICES learning event. This could build on Community Development linkages and build a base of parental skill and confidence.

Establish links to parents previously engaged on programmes and make them multipliers of buy in to future programmes.

Build a phased approach with different year groups.

## Material 9: Parental Work aligned with the Development of Garda Contact

A most valuable development has been that of promoting opportunities for parents to examine how they might become partners in learning with their children as well as grow their own confidence in learning again. This, aligned with short courses that assisted parents restore relationships and value relationships that may have become conflictual, is to be welcomed.

I met one parents group for a two and a half hour discussion. Their self-confidence, their ease in engaging with very sensitive themes around their experiences as parents and their ability to identify changes and developments in their own learning and development were a joy to hear and a great affirmation of the work of the facilitator, the Home School Community liaison staff involved, the facilitation of Netcare and the support of the school principal and staff.

Future work with this type of group may need to be developed with a local facilitator resource plus a group such as Netcare due to timing and distance.

### OUTPUTS

#### The speakers evidenced:

*“My house is now a more educationally switched on house.  
I am now able to stand back and take some space before getting into a conflict situation with my child.  
We are now interested in education-we have something to offer.  
There is a higher attendance now from our kids.  
I sit more with my child and spend time with him.  
I plan family days out now and look forward to them.  
I listen more to other views.  
We have completed a course on parenting and dealing with conflicts.  
I have started a ‘back to work course’.  
We are no longer alone coming to this school.”*

In addition outputs were:

The development of materials and approaches for work with parents.  
The growth of a systems approach to restorative schools.  
Resources and materials on dealing with individual students doing harm.



## OUTCOMES

*“I have less anger and conflict with my children now.  
There is more talk between us about positive parenting.  
I used to blame them all the time, now I think about how I might have contributed.  
I express my views openly now and am not afraid or embarrassed so easily as before.  
I have a great relationship now with my kids’ teachers.  
I have experienced real change in me since coming to this group.”*

Growing links between Principals, Staff, Home School liaison, parents, adult education and the Garda community officers in areas of need.

The opportunities for new, mutual understandings between some teachers and parents who wished to augment their children’s learning.

## ISSUES

This group gave clear examples of becoming more ordered in their relationships, having a voice and becoming more interdependent with other parents as friends or supports.

Some people spoke about real and lasting changes taking place in their lives.

The potential of a three year accredited course for parents around the needs of children, parents getting out of conflict, parents and teachers working collaboratively, parents returning to education for skill development, back to work courses and even getting involved in school boards all seem possible, in the experience of this group.

Could such parents now become advocates for more restorative school cultures as their children move from primary to secondary school?

## RESTORATIVE CHALLENGES

If restorative means: “the tendency to give new strength or vigour” (see earlier-Jenkins,A.,2006,) then for a number of these parents education had harmed them when young-it had not served them well.This course and the welcome of the principal, staff and parent tutors into the Primary School was, in itself, restorative.

Where primary level schools promote restorative cultures, however minimally, and parents and children get second chances to develop how can the cultures of second level schools then be changed in a commensurate manner?

There is a need for the Restorative Practices Network to now look at how they can promote more restorative cultures within and between different school levels.

There also is an important challenge about how previously disenfranchised parents, coming to life through restorative practices courses, are brought into the mainstream and not just left apart.They have much to teach schools about the power of education to inspire as well as demean.

## Material 10: The Rathdown / Dun Laoghaire RESTORATIVE PRACTICES Partnership

### Schools are a central catalyst in this Partnership

There appears to be a time scale of at least three years that principals can envisage to develop a critical mass of restorative practice. It is believed that the configurations of agencies involved make the Partnership a first in Ireland. There is potential for this Partnership to challenge diverse agencies such as the County Manager, Public Safety, estate management, community development, environment, business development and enterprise to work more collaboratively with schools, youth services and parent development groups on a civic restorative agenda.

The restorative agenda for these agencies would be about restoring well being and promoting attainment and achievement in education that benefits the local skill base. This vision would articulate a greater sense of coherence and cohesion on the broader civic tasks of public safety, economic development and regeneration. Such 'future generation' work would open access for children, young people and their parents to wider opportunity in a changing economic environment.

### OUTPUTS

Looking at the experiences of School based Staff-Principals, Counsellors, Home School Liaison teachers, School Completion Officers and Home School Liaison there are diverse starting points for schools. Some are connected with incidents and staff feeling vulnerable and others are at a distance from harmful events and therefore can be more systemic in their nature because there is no over-riding demand for urgent resolution.

Understandably because there has been only a small number of innovative programmes of restorative approaches developed in Ireland to date (See the work of: Paddy O' Connor; Jim Mc Grath, Seamus Farrell, Marian Martin, Margaret Mc Garrigle; the earlier work of Gerry Tyrell and others) the Principals in this network have taken time to promote the concepts and support staff open to developing the practice.

### OUTCOMES

Now that there are a number of models being developed:

- There is the potential of a whole school approach around restorative principles;
- There are class and year based approaches developing;
- There are specific responses to incidents being promoted on a restorative base;
- There are classroom initiatives around circle time approaches;
- There are counselling and home school liaison initiatives.

It is possible to envisage the Partnership being able to gather, support and sustain a more broadly based learning culture of staff from diverse levels and types of schools. Such a cluster could grow into a more critically reflective and knowledgeable cluster on 'Restorative Approaches in Schools'.

## ISSUES

The restorative practices network is enabling adults in diverse institutions to deal with matters that too readily fester and erupt if unattended. Minor confrontations can too readily escalate when not attended to in a restorative manner.

Guidance Counsellors and School Completion Staff are another very useful node of Restorative Practices in Schools. These staff are in a position to value that a good school culture depends on the level of adult maturity and openness with one another, as well as with and between students. For these staff, the programme affirms their understanding that restorative practices is about how people relate to one another; are fair; respectful and responsible with one another.

## RESTORATIVE CHALLENGES

A significant number of staff underlined that *“This is not an approach that is to do only with the disadvantaged and not those with advantage. This is not only a programme that students have to take on, this is an adult professional and parenting task as well.”* It is essential that Restorative Practices does not become only associated with DEIS Schools and with disadvantage and vulnerability. Champions for Restorative Practices are needed across the social spectrum so that models of relevance to all backgrounds are promoted and that wider civil society discusses restorative practices as a potential societal culture<sup>7</sup>.



<sup>7</sup> Wilson, Derick (2009) Platforms for a Restorative Society in Northern Ireland. Restorative Justice Organisation, 10pp  
<http://www.restorativejustice.org/10fulltext/Platforms%20for%20a%20Restorative%20Society%20Dec%202009.doc/view>

## Material 11: Primary School Principal

This interview went to and fro between understandings of restorative that are about going back to the way things were before they went wrong and restore as being future oriented, promoting well being and vigour.  
(See earlier reference to Jenkins)

The main challenge of restorative practices in this school has been to find practical ways to restore children who are growing up in family situations where there are:

- many pressures on parents or carers - 'the process understanding' of restorative practices;
- promoting values – 'the values concept' of restorative practices
- breaking cycles of low self-worth and under achievement (the equity dimension of restorative practices).

The school, even though it serves many homes that have very limited resources, has set itself the goal of introducing the children to the wider world beyond the school and local community, affirming in the children that they can negotiate strange places and supporting them in journeying to other areas, and even other countries. Each child has personal agency, each can make a difference and the school places that experience in the children.

In essence the school gives children possibility, choice and opportunity. It enables people to restore communication with those they have become distanced from.

### What is restorative?

This principal described the struggle to promote a restorative culture in the way the school worked each day. The children and their parents need a deeper and wider engagement with the school each day that supports them.

The Principal was not only promoting a set of restorative questions, although that discipline is a useful one for children to use when there are conflicts and harm done. The principal wanted a whole school culture to develop.

Home school liaison work associated with this school is deeply integrated with the broader vision the Principal has for the school. Restorative actions in day to day meeting and engaging teachers, children and parents are about communication and working to a base of values.

Many of the families are living under high levels of deprivation; many of the homes offer few rituals of sitting together and sharing meals and so some of the rituals and forms of working together in school are seeking to make up for this gap in children's lives.

This school had a therapeutic facility capable of offering time and resources to individual children. This facility has been generated with local support and is a deeply restorative facility. In practically supporting children remain within the bounds of a public school yet have additional support, this is deeply inclusive.

Restorative practice is a diagnostic tool about the relationships that have gone wrong but also about promoting the sorts of changes and developments that groups and institutions need to promote well being.

For children to have a sense of safety in playing is a restorative action.

## OUTPUTS

A nurture room facility has been created in one Primary School. This enables children who otherwise would be excluded to make their way within the shelter of the same school.

*Note: While not a direct output of the Restorative Practices, two very useful underpinning programmes by HSE should be acknowledged. Two other primary schools have funded facilities (An NYP Programme and a Springboard Programme) within schools that, along the lines of offering distinct support to children and families needing additional resources, complement the inclusive and restorative cultures of these schools.*

Parent courses have taken place have been well received by the parents.

Regular meetings on a monthly basis are being held between the four primary schools and the secondary school the pupils go forward to.

## OUTCOMES

The quality of relationships between teachers and parents has improved substantially.  
Some parents are now getting more involved in support of their children's education.

## ISSUES

Schools are one potential site for alleviating some of the deficits in 'out of school' life.

The atmosphere of the school has to be warm, inviting and accepting in ways that many other locations are not.

There is a need to establish quality initiatives linking teachers and social workers, mandated to work in more innovative ways. Currently teacher participation at family conferences with Social Services are very difficult to service.

Links to the Garda are easier than links with Social Services. However even here there needs to be a dedicated local pilot programme where, non-sceptical professionals work with them in a dynamic and challenging way. Such programmes challenges young people who do harm and supports them as they make new choices in life.

## RESTORATIVE PRACTICE CHALLENGES

The school needs to fashion spaces that model structure, safety and open and non- judgemental communication.

Restorative practices have to be delivering practical experiences that:  
enhance well being in children's lives and in the possibilities parents see for themselves and their children.  
Restorative Practices have to develop a new partnership between teachers, parents and children.

If this work only is located in primary schools without the second level schools also becoming restorative, the restorative agenda is limited.

## Material 12: School Completion and Counselling Staff

The staff had been introduced to school completion programmes and counselling, often because of the need to target children and young people who are being 'difficult' and encouraging them to stay on to the end of school, both primary and secondary.

The challenges of the job from a restorative dimension are diverse:

- For some their initial training was with an informal education / youthwork background. The restorative value base sits more readily with youth work values than with school culture currently, for some.
- For others they came to counseling and school completion programmes that were about young people taking responsibility for their actions. Their task is to challenge people to 'take responsibility' and develop this approach as a societal norm, embedded in their lives.

Restorative means trying to bring young people back to feeling they can exercise choice in their lives. Taking ownership of one's life is, in itself, restorative if young people have lapsed into being other directed rather than self directed.

Restorative means that the school culture invites staff, children and young people to regain some control and be with one another in respectful ways. It is important also that the restorative agenda should be for all schools and not just those that have a history of problems or schools that deal primarily with young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

The challenge is that restorative values and ways of working are deeply embedded in all aspects of school life. It was felt that these are, at best, tendency is that these are at best schemes that do not really touch the core practices and daily routines.

### OUTPUTS

Other than significant changes in the circumstances staff were unsure of structural commitments and changes they had effected.

### OUTCOMES

There were now a number of networks of School Completion, Social Workers, Counsellors working together.

### ISSUES

A central theme is whether and how these important jobs could become more integrated into the Principal's remit and structure within each school. The experience was of being valued but not central to the life of the school.

### RESTORATIVE PRACTICE CHALLENGES

The major challenge is the need for second level schools to be 'convinced' that whole school restorative cultures work and that Restorative approaches are not just for the primary schools. *(Note the New Zealand, Lancashire, Middlesborough, Australian experience is of all levels embracing the restorative school approach).*

## 4. THE DISTINCTIVE 'VALUE ADDED' CONTRIBUTION OF THE PROGRAMME AGAINST THE CORE OBJECTIVES

## 4. THE DISTINCTIVE 'VALUE ADDED' CONTRIBUTION OF THE PROGRAMME AGAINST THE CORE OBJECTIVES

The evaluation returned to the interview material from the visits and interviews and gathered clusters of themes from this material. These elements were then placed against a number of lenses.

### 4.1: The lens of Outputs and Outcomes and the Stated Objectives of the Programme.

#### OUTPUTS

##### **Objective 1: Promoting Models of good practice in schools, communities and specialist provisions.**

A strong and influential group of principals committed to implementing restorative practices has now been established.

Guidance counsellors, health professionals, out of school staff, school completion staff, youth workers, garda and home school link staff have all co-operated with teachers in discrete local initiatives. Such outputs point to a model of effective restorative practice emerging, if it could be more broadly supported and mandated by the diverse agencies.

Three Nurture Rooms have been developed and voluntary and community charitable resources secured for these.

Staff training courses have been offered to other interested staff.

There is now a critical mass of people and small groups committed to promoting 'restorative practices' in schools. These are directly attributable to the programme.

Children's attainment rates in a number of schools have risen. These rises are attributed to the Restorative Practices approach.

Some restorative programmes have developed that engage and challenge all involved to change their attitudes and make new choices. Some of these programmes evidence higher completion rates for groups of young males who have previously been on a failure path.

A number of schools evidenced their environments being safer and more inclusive.

Parents evidenced their children being able to pick up ideas around dealing with conflict and bringing those understandings home.

Parents spoke of now having a greater sense of personal agency and voice through the improvement in the experience of the Parent Support groups.

Video resources for peer mediation and parental work have been created.



## **Objective 2: Promoting Multi-agency and multi-disciplinary teams using the spectrum of restorative approaches across all settings where children live and learn**

The Restorative Practices Reference group has been formed.

An area of innovative and important restorative practice has been established across a range of public, criminal justice and civil society agencies and groups.

Such initiatives are deeply restorative in that they promote inclusion, participation and are transforming life chances for children, young people and their wider family and caring networks.

A low motivation class has been turned around through restorative approaches. Students who were not expected to complete the year did so.

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## **Objective 3: Promoting Structures that support the embedding of a restorative model across schools and communities.**

### ***Inter-Agency Partnerships***

An inter- agency partnership has been established through the actions of the Partnership and individual staff.

A number of institutions have made resources for Restorative Practices available from their core programme budget.

### ***Course Provision***

In numerous formats a raft of short courses has been established for teachers, whole school staff and parents.

Specific inter- generational courses on restorative practices have been developed.

Staff and parents evidenced a growth in dealing with conflict situations.

### ***School Staff Development***

Some interviewed spoke of now having the confidence to work more restoratively with very vulnerable groups. There is now a greater freedom for principals to develop discrete 'class' based restorative approaches.

The programme has given voice to some mid and early career staff and also for a number of Special Needs Assistants. Restorative Practices is a potential cross-disciplinary, and across-grade, facilitator.

Restorative practices have integrated teachers and Special Educational Needs Assistants and Nurture Room staff.

## **CONCLUSION ON OUTPUTS**

There are a considerable number of documented output elements relevant to each of the stated objectives, as above.

## OUTCOMES

### Objective 1: Models of good practice in schools, communities and specialist provisions.

Restorative practices are evidenced in a number of schools, their systems and the changes they are seeking to make.

Schools were developing a 'responsibility culture' internally.

There is a distinct move away from an 'individual pathology' approach (the fault of children) to a more systemic, 'public remedies' (public policy / structure) approach evidenced by several schools and a number of staff.

The reach of restorative practices is evidenced in the language used by some parents, professionals working together and civil society group members.

Schools articulated that their standing locally was increased by the restorative practices programme. There were positive developments in relations with parents in all the schools consulted.

### Objective 2: Multi-agency and multi-disciplinary teams using the spectrum of restorative approaches across all settings where children live and learn

An embryonic community development, youth work, education, community education and health and criminal justice partnership on restorative practice is in evidence.

The programme has facilitated at least two new 'Garda, Parent, School and Community' Partnerships.

### Objective 3: Structures that support the embedding of a restorative model across schools and communities.

A diverse Restorative Practices Learning Network is being sustained.

The interviews evidenced a growing number of people buying into restorative practices.

Recent courses with children and young people's units is an additional growth.

There is a growing realization of the potential of the cross discipline Restorative Practices Reference Group.

The Cross Discipline Restorative practices Group would have a stronger mandate if each person was mandated to attend and report back to their agencies.

## CONCLUSION ON OUTCOMES

There are considerable documented outcome elements associated with each of the stated objectives as above.

## THE DISTINCTIVE ‘VALUE ADDED’ CONTRIBUTION OF THE PROGRAMME IN TERMS OF WIDER ADVOCACY

### 4.2 The Lens of the Wider Advocacy Potential of the Programme

#### ISSUES

- A. There is a wider institutional, civil society and policy / legal development canvas that practitioners should consider engaging with.

There is a need for restorative practitioners (see A below in Fig 2) to prioritise the learning from their practice that needs communicated to:

- B. their own agency to enhance its internal working culture;
- C. those that develop Public Policy and Political Impact
- D. wider Civil Society audiences (see Fig 6 below).

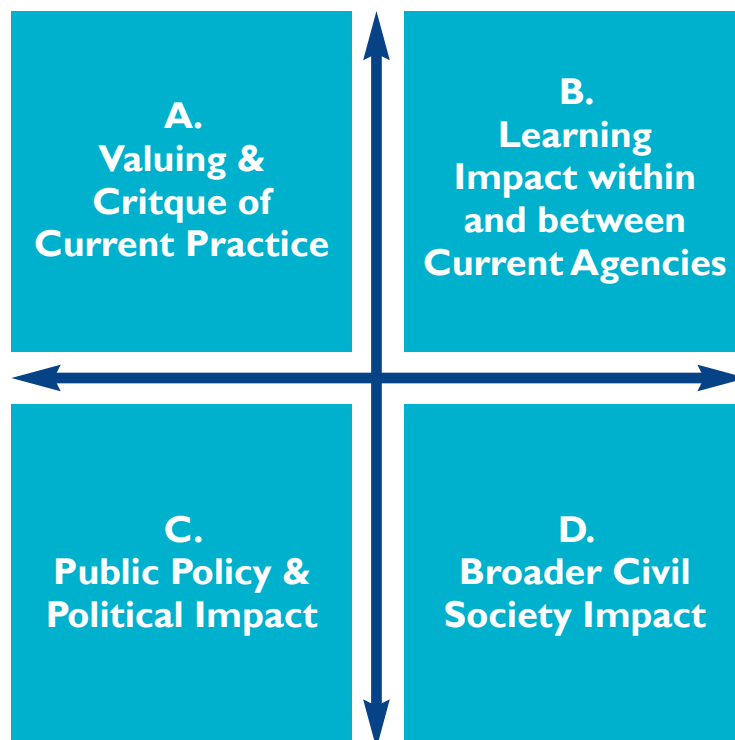


Figure 2 : Local Work and the Potential for Wider Impact

## **B. Drawing on the diverse issues emerging and examining whether there is potential for the project to advocate its practice and learning the following themes emerge.**

### **Learning Impact within (and between) the Agencies**

Principals in schools are central change agents if the restorative practices agenda is to take root. The principals in the partnership have been key to legitimizing the diverse restorative initiatives that have emerged.

Their example could be used to invite senior directors in other agencies to form a Leadership Panel that mandate staff develop a variety of agency and inter agency practice.

The Home School Liaison restorative practice structurally may need a more central position within the centre of school organisational culture, on a level with teachers and under the convenorship of the Principal. There are distinct knowledge and experience sets these staff carry that schools may use better.

Both in terms of the relationships formed between staff and the way they have now knitted some agencies together, there is now a base of stakeholders capable of promoting an inter-agency vision and approach to this work. Restorative practices have to be earthed, real and capable of changing the relationships and experience of people locally. This is the real work of agencies in this field.

Zehr<sup>8</sup> states three central themes of the restorative process with victims as being characterised by the movement from:

- disorder to order;
- disempowered voice to empowered voice;
- disconnected relationships to a sense of connectedness

In talking with stakeholders from diverse agencies considerable traces of these themes were evidenced. Earlier in this document reference was made to Zehr's three levels of restorative work (Zehr<sup>9</sup>).

In the school visits there were excellent examples of these strands in action.

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<sup>8</sup> See 'Journey to belonging' in Weitekamp and Kerner, 2002, Willan Publishing. p23.

<sup>9</sup> Zehr, H.

### **Examples of bringing order and structure:**

*Affirming the practice of innovative primary school approaches to restore order to children who have led very disordered lives through initiatives such as 'nurture rooms or their equivalent'. The experience of meeting staff involved in these initiatives, often dependent on goodwill and voluntary resources were, to the eye of the researcher, underlined the restorative contribution of these programmes.*

### **Examples of empowering voice**

*The number of innovative programmes with secondary school pupils that gave marginal pupils voice and renewed access to opportunities sheltering under the Comenius programme needs disseminated more.*

*The innovative work with parents who now experience their own self-worth and value and see a role for themselves in assisting their children learn and in getting involved in educational initiatives.*

### **Examples of promoting relatedness**

*The evidence from both primary and secondary schools where individual staff or teams of staff have diligently set out to improve the relational character of their schools needs valued.*

*Such initiatives could distil their learning about how institutional change can be promoted, what obstacles need identified and how good restorative practices can be more widely disseminated as models of good practice.*

*Schools incorporating these ways of working lend significance to the value of restorative approaches in schools in the wider civil society.*

In visiting centres and interviewing practitioners I evidenced elements of all three strands under the Comenius umbrella.

### **Ensuring that Good Local Produce is Valued**

The evaluator came across a number of excellent innovations in restorative practices within the area that not all members of the Restorative Partnership were aware of. This disables the learning potential in the group. Some attention to ensuring that good local practice is noticed, shared, valued and affirmed would be beneficial.

Developing an overarching vision for Restorative Practices within which diverse strands of restorative practice complement one another.

The 'skills and repairing immediate harm focus' for many people starting in this work is understandable. It is, however, limiting. The practice needs a sound knowledge base, and an underpinning values structure to underpin the widening and deepening practice across diverse professional, voluntary and community bases.

Agencies benefit when they regularly re-visit their aims, vision and values bases and ensure they are implicitly and explicitly aligned<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Eyben, Karin, Morrow, Duncan and Wilson, Derick (2002), The Equity, Diversity and Interdependence Framework: A Framework for Organisational Learning and Change. University of Ulster. 112pp ISBN 1-85923-160-8 Pp 25-31. See <http://eprints.ulster.ac.uk/12598/>

### C. Public Policy & Political Impact

It has been important that a semi-public community development agency has been able to act as a bridge for diverse stakeholders to engage with restorative practices across community development, policing, sport, adult education, schooling, parent initiatives, youth work, school completion, home liaison, youth counselling and youth diversion work.

The Blackrock Education Centre, as a learning centre, has significantly legitimised circles of people supporting the organic development of restorative schools with other agencies. The Centre has been a shared civic space for diverse people and agencies to meet together and act in common. This has given many people a voice they have often not used before.

The VEC have the potential to convene comprehensive briefings for the different political parties on the value and impact of restorative practices.

Transition points in the lives of children and young people appear to be excellent points to generate new interest in restorative practices. This theme should be used more in challenges to policy.

The recent teachers' agreement about additional hours is an opportunity to insert integrated restorative approaches in to training and learning provision.

Drawing on a recent review of an adult education Level 5 FETAC Provision, associated with restorative justice practice, it is an opportune time for a statement of restorative practice standards and values to be more widely articulated.

### Broader Civil Society Impact

Higher Education providers should be active in partnership with platforms of community providers in this area of practice.

The work evidenced here would grow further if a wider public and civic culture developed that embraced restorative practice principles.

The parental voice that has been empowered is that of parents of vulnerable children who wish to get on better with their children. In this programme of work these parents have become active assistants in the learning and motivation process around schools.

### CONCLUSION

The Programme is well placed and knowledgeable about issues of importance to:

- the sponsoring agencies and their potential for more joint working in this area;
- wider public policy and political decision makers locally and nationally;
- and wider civil society interests.

Greater attention should be considered appropriate in this area for Year Two.

## THE DISTINCTIVE 'VALUE ADDED' CONTRIBUTION OF THE PROGRAMME TO THE PUBLIC AND CIVIC GOOD.

### 4.3. The Lens of Values, Best Practice Models, Research Information and the Public and Civic Good

A number of people can now gather together around diverse restorative practice approaches or starting points and share their experience. This aggregated practice, reflected upon in a self critical manner, will deliver significant understandings for this practitioner group and will, collectively, be able to distil significant learning points for the development of this practice.

### RESTORATIVE PRACTICE CHALLENGES

One strategy for gathering the diverse practices that are elements of the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Partnership approach could be:

2010-2011 Focus Engaging with RP	2011-2012 Focus Developing Skilful Practice	2011-2012 Focus Embedding the Practice Securing Changes in Relational and Organisational Practices
<b>VALUES</b> What values guide the engagement?	What values need articulated as being central?	What values are embedded?
<b>MODELS</b> What best practice models inform the beginning of this intervention?	What best practice models exist or are being developed now?	What best practice is being embedded?
<b>RESEARCH</b> What research evidence are we able to draw on?	What research informs or challenges the evolving practice?	How is the practice we are embedding supported by best research evidence?
<b>PUBLIC AND CIVIL GOOD</b> How is the wider Public and Civil Good Understood currently?	What wider Civic and Public Good are we promoting?	What wider Civic and Public Good are we standing for?

Fig 3: Engaging with Best Values, Practice and Research that promotes the wider Public and Civil Society Engagement with Restorative Practices (The above model is a local development, drawing on the work of Prof. Marie Connolly, School of Social Work, Melbourne on Family Group Conferences)

At the end of Year One, there are opportunities both to affirm and to consolidate distinct elements of Restorative Practice as well as bring these different strands into some wider vision of a Restorative Practices Approach that is:

- Value led,
- Best Practice challenged,
- Informed by Research
- Serving the wider 'civic good-public well-being' assumptions

## VALUES BASED

The Partnership now could consider offering membership on a more demanding basis, with stakeholders being institutionally committed to developing specific practices.

Some people interviewed spoke of a relational way of working that held themselves and others to account for their actions through relational work and embryonic restorative policies within their organisations. These approaches evidence traces of what is understood to be a 'narrative discourse approach' to restorative practice. This is a very values led approach.

In such an approach the behaviour is the problem, not the person. This allows everyone involved to be accountable for their actions as well as offering those who have harmed other spaces and opportunities to demonstrate that they can act differently, with support and new agreements about their future behaviour. This approach 'calls people to account' through active and demanding relationships. (See Wendy Drewery's work).

## BEST PRACTICE

### **Parental Inclusion is capable of generating parent advocates**

This Programme evidences that restorative practices are changing the quality of life for children, young people, parents, teachers and related professionals. "We are no longer coming to school alone" encapsulates the development made possible by work with parents.

The programme has the capacity to add restorative practices value to existing excellent provision with parents and the VEC could promote this as part of a wider educational approach.

Parents who spoke highly of sessions they had on restorative approaches could be powerful multipliers of further parental groups and interest.

### **The Youth Service has the potential for enhancing Public Good**

The Youth Service, as yet, has limited clout in terms of challenging public policy. Restorative practices could assist the service here. The highlighting of opportunities to engage a readily identified group of vulnerable young people, continuously in the focus of diverse agencies is possible.

An innovative health, education, social welfare, housing and employment preparation programme of a restorative nature could become a flagship integrated youth provision model.



Joined up working between diverse practitioners and professionals can be enhanced through working to a restorative agenda. The fact that several care teams were now meeting with parents of pupils is a direct outcome from the restorative practices work.

### **Gathering the Learning from Year 1 to shape Year 2**

There is a need for the learning from the diverse practices in Year 1 to be distilled.

There is the potential for Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown Comenius Regio and the Teachers Centre, as community based providers, to offer a Restorative Practices Module to be offered to head teachers, teachers and student teachers in training.

In Year 2 it may be strategic for the Partnership to develop a more explicit statement of understanding about the restorative ethos, values and principles they are promoting collectively. This would enable existing practitioners and agencies to move forward and 'raise their game' collectively. It would also establish base line relationship and organisational standards of best practice that are restorative for those who might now want to come on board.

## **BEST RESEARCH**

Whilst there were many examples of restorative approaches within schools and agencies, there were few whole organisation approaches evidenced. This is an understandable phase in the organic development of this programme.

### **Securing teacher commitments to Areas of Social Deprivation**

There is a temptation for teachers to leave teaching positions in areas with high numbers of vulnerable children and young people. In other areas of the world (see earlier references) the restorative practices research demonstrates that restorative schools have been able to promote greater inclusion and greater levels of attainment as well as greater staff satisfaction and reduced levels of stress. Restoring equity will depend on the manner in which resources are being allocated and organisational cultures are being changed.

## **THE PUBLIC AND CIVIC GOOD**

### **A new co-working model has emerged around Restorative Practices**

There is an emerging restorative paradigm between Garda, VEC and the Schools Sector.

The partnership can advocate for these approaches locally and nationally by strategically partnering other restorative pilots.

### **Area agreements about social inclusion policies would be beneficial**

Many interviewed highlighted the lack of an area policy for schools, where all were committed to being inclusive organisations serving the needs of all the children and young people of the area. People spoke of schools competing and some schools being able to displace the children and young people seen to be difficult on to certain other schools. This ad hoc arrangement does not promote a restorative civic value.

### **Restorative practices are about delivering equity.**

Considerable numbers of practitioners spoke about the need for additional resources for vulnerable children and young people to be advocated for. They saw the Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown Partnership having a bridging function in generating this public policy challenge<sup>11</sup>.

Parental development around restorative principles, delivered through groups in the Primary School, can be a worthwhile theme in parental development and confidence. Often parents interviewed spoke about this work not getting carried over into second level school participation.

### **Different School Models of Restorative Practices could be promoted.**

If a group of principals could establish a primary to secondary restorative culture programme this could model a new approach, including parents as well.

Coming to the end of a series of interviews with people from diverse professional, community and institutional experiences on the Comenius Regio Programme a number of diverse strands of best practice are evident (See Fig 4, B Steele Scottish Model in Appendix).

Some people, within schools, have started into this work through:

- Addressing major clashes in school- healing relationships-(The Intensive Level)
- Addressing problems of behaviour as they emerge in a holistic manner
- Promoting a strand of peer mediation (See the Targetted Level)
- Addressing the particular needs of children who need more equitable attention
- Addressing behaviour management challenges and school completion challenges
- Promoting School Conferences as a means of conflict resolution
- Developing a circle time approach within schools. (See the Universal Level)
- Promoting systemic change and giving leadership for whole school culture development. (See Fig 5)

<sup>11</sup> It would be advantageous for the Skelmersdale Model (SHARES) to be considered as a way forward on this allied to a public policy discussion on meeting social need. <http://shareslancashire.co.uk/>

Other practitioners, outside schools, have developed initiatives in terms of:

- Enhancing greater parental voice and empowerment.
- Addressing the need for offender reparation processes
- Promoting more inclusive youth work practices.

### **Public Debate and Policy Engagement**

This is an opportune time for the Partnership to become a coherent advocating network for securing restorative practices and values within different public and voluntary agencies as well as in professional disciplines.

There is now a further development possible in linking Restorative Practices with Education Welfare and Social Welfare policies and practices.

Restorative Practice advocates need to articulate the priority being about seeking ‘public remedies’ not a ‘private problem’ approach.



## 5. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION OF THE DÚN LAOGHAIRE / RATHDOWN COMENIUS REGIO PARTNERSHIP 2011 - 2012

## 5. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION OF THE DUN LAOGHAIRE /RATH-DOWN COMENIUS REGIO PARTNERSHIP 2011-2012

### Looking Forward - The Work of the Partnership

#### 5.1. This Restorative Practices Partnership is situated within both the public and civic spheres.

This project is significant because it grew through people voluntarily getting involved as citizens, then bringing in major voluntary and community agencies and semi -public institutions (the SSP Partnership Board).

It now engages with statutory areas of responsibility such as education, health, policing, and the criminal justice system. It also has connections with innovative work with parents and inclusive youth work practices locally.

On the wider restorative practices spectrum this programme is associated with a number of state, public, voluntary, community and civil society restorative approaches.



Fig 4: A SPECTRUM OF RESTORATIVE APPROACHES - FROM STATUTORY CRIMINAL JUSTICE TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELL BEING TO FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION TO INFORMAL NGO AND WIDER CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENTS-DA Wilson, June 2011

## 5.2. Different programme strands evidence different balances between state involvement and civil society and these are strengths

Building a secure society with public institutions that have the support of the citizen base are deeply inter-linked with nourishing, and refreshing, a robust civil society<sup>12</sup>. Strang & Braithwaite argue that 'both state and civil society...can act as a check and balance on the other'<sup>13</sup> and that more restorative approaches support the development and strength of both.

The development of restorative practices is a valuable support to ensuring that essential state institutions are held to account and challenged about how they serve the common good by complementary civil society organisations that are strong and enjoy wide acceptability.



Figure 5: A Virtuous Circle where Restorative Justice Supports Civil Society and State Authority, Braithwaite<sup>14</sup>

For modern states to be societies where the public institutions are trusted depends on those same societies having strong and independent civil society infrastructures. Michael Edwards is one of the leading thinkers and activists in this area. In his book *The Love that does Justice*, Edwards argues "current work focuses on the links between personal and social transformation, following Gandhi's advice that we should "be the change we want to see in the world" and Martin Luther King's philosophy of the "Love that does Justice" or the "Beloved Community." (See <http://www.futurepositive.org/home.php>)

<sup>12</sup> Edwards, M. (2004) *Civil Society*, Cambridge: Polity Press

<sup>13</sup> Braithwaite, J. 'Institutionalising distrust, enculturating trust' in V Braithwaite & M Levi (eds) *Trust and Governance*, New York, Russell Sage, 1998.

<sup>14</sup> See *Restorative Justice and Civil Society*, Strang and Braithwaite, CUP, 2001.

### 5.3 Promoting the Value of Restorative Practices more widely

The Restorative Practices Programme has spawned a wide range of restorative practice responses throughout the area. There are many elements of value led, excellent practice. The evaluator sometimes found people underplaying the significance of their practice or that good practice was not being locally valued and given significance.

Although the restorative language weaves throughout the network currently, the next stage of development should consider two priorities.

#### **Internally deepen the understanding of restorative practices within the engaged practitioner base by:**

- promoting shared and common understandings of the restorative values underpinning this practice;
- developing best practice standards of a restorative nature across sectors that deepen the restorative elements of the practice;
- drawing on relevant research that can underpin and enhance some practice and raise the bar for others to reach towards.

#### **Externally supporting practitioners and agencies to:**

- engage with the relevant legal and policy levers that can be used to promote more public and civic openness to restorative working;
- articulate the economic benefits that are served by having a more restorative culture in the wider society;
- convey the benefits for the public and civic good of more workforces being able to resolve difficulties before conflicts escalate if they have a restorative culture;
- ensure that less children and young people enter the criminal justice system and care services;
- ensure there are fewer conflicted schools that are then more able to promote wider achievement;
- ensure that fewer citizens act in harmful manners.

## 5.4 Overall Conclusions:

### a. The Programme has, potentially, been a 'transformative platform' between diverse parties.

Overall the Comenius Restorative Practices initiative in Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown has been and continues to be, primarily, a civic vehicle for promoting diverse creative responses to issues of harm being done to or by children and young people in the area.

The programme is, potentially, an 'active transformative platform'<sup>15</sup> between:

- statutory and voluntary agencies;
- between formal school approaches and informal youth work;
- between statutory family support provision, adult and community education approaches and imaginative community safety initiatives;
- between school based approaches and wider community, play and family based support programmes.

At the end of Year One, there is an opportunity both to affirm and consolidate distinct elements of Restorative Practice as well as bring these strands into some wider vision of a coherent and integrating Restorative Practices approach.

Potentially the programme is a bridge for more restorative approaches being developed across education, social care, criminal justice, community development and youth service provision. It appeared to the researcher that such potential could best be further realised and promoted by staff being formally mandated in their involvement at the most senior level within their agencies.

### b. The Intention of the Programme needs to be re-stated as an all age involvement in Restorative Practices.

To the evaluator, there appeared to be an assumed culture within the Programme that primary schools were, and are, more appropriate places to develop this practice. Primary schools are essential to this task, yet evidence from Canada, the US, England, Australia, Ireland, Scotland, New Zealand, among others, would challenge this narrow 'wisdom'. There are benefits accruing to all levels of schools embarking on such a path and all levels have evidence of reduced tension and conflict, enhanced performance levels, greater teacher ease, parental engagement and support and pupil attainment.

<sup>15</sup> Lederach, J.P. 2005. The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace. Oxford, MA: Oxford University Press, 2005.



### **c. The Programme is a mosaic of diverse practices in addressing harm or the potential to do harm.**

Addressing harm or attempting to put in place systemic practices and organisational cultures that make the generation of harmful acts less likely are important contributions. Different people, understandably, have had different starting points:

- Some with the space afforded by working in less conflictual circumstances have been able to look further ahead in a more preventative manner;
- Others have been more dominated by the need for immediate resolution and have rightly sought some responses to crisis or relational and structural difficulties;

All, in their own way, have started and this must be welcomed. The project has emerged as a platform on which many, often traditionally unconnected, people and professional interests have gathered.

### **d. Remaining Peripheral or Becoming Structurally Central?**

The reality is that many Restorative Practices are being developed alongside mainstream practices. With some exceptions this work is additional to the existing professional or organisational practices that have been laid down and followed for many years, rather than replacing them.

There is a possibility that restorative practices and philosophies could remain peripheral rather than become embedded at the centre of organisational practices, whether they are schools, youth agencies, public authorities, community development or criminal justice agencies. This is a major challenge.

### **e. Restorative Practices, Economic Development and Regional Sustainability are inter-linked.**

In common with many other education based initiatives, the contribution of this work to assisting the growth of future economic development and regional sustainability is downplayed. There are economic arguments for promoting ease with different others (Varshney), and reducing levels of inequality (Gaffikin & Morrissey, *Planning in Divided Cities*, John Wiley Press, 2011).

### **f. Promoting effective 'learning communities' about restorative practices.**

The benefit of the first stage of the Comenius Partnership is that it has enabled connections to be established between a base of diverse practices relevant to restorative practices.

The Partnership should now give priority to promoting and securing a diverse group of people, with the support of the groups and institutions they volunteer or work for, and support them in reflective, 'practice changing' restorative learning.

The focus of these 'reflective learning communities' would be to integrate the work of diverse stakeholders around core developmental understandings of:

- the importance of restorative practice values, principles and core approaches being promoted within and between diverse agencies focussed on the well being of children, young people and their families;
- the benefits of adults addressing harm and promoting a culture of making things right before they escalate in families, schools, community organisations, public and civic organisations;
- the potential wider contribution of this practice to underpinning sustainable regional economies;
- the restorative contribution to making communities and public spaces safer.

**g. There are distinctive roles here potentially for:**

**The Blackrock Education Centre in:**

Assisting teachers and related practitioners distil and embed restorative practices within the different levels of the school systems and home school liaison as well as school completion programmes as well as mount CPD related programmes.

**Southside Partnership with Blackrock Education Centre in:**

Promoting and supporting the embryonic network of Principals with an interest in restorative approaches is key to the future. The experience of these people is, potentially, a powerful influencer of developmental practices within and between their schools.

**Promoting and Supporting 'Learning Community' clusters of staff from diverse agencies**

At a cross sector level, the quarterly, and often well attended, sessions in the Blackrock Education Centre, with many staff from the diverse interested parties, could have an enhanced reflective learning role about restorative practices being understood more deeply and applied coherently within and between the different agencies.

Within sectors too there is a practice base that could be reflected on and developed more if staff were brought together for regular reflective learning sessions.

I did not evidence all participants, as yet, having had the opportunity and support to envision how their most important practice was working to, and securing, an agreed, commonly held core understanding about restorative practice.

The next phase of this programme should seek to affirm and embolden diverse practitioners to continue with their very important practice and see how they, collectively, are developing something that is unique and important for the future of children and young people.

**A renewed clear structure and terms of reference for different groups might assist here.**

**Establish, more formally, a structure that sets out the distinct duties of:**

**The Steering Group and the relationship of this group to  
The Restorative Practices Network  
and**

**Working Groups on:**

**Developing Resources, Peer Mediation Initiatives and Parental Support.**

#### **h. Restorative practice is both a process led concept and a values led concept.**

Restorative practices in Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown could now secure the values base of Restorative Practices in addition to the process base that has been well promoted. A coherent values base, once agreed and established, would allow a diversity of starting points for a coherent practice to flower.

Different people in different positions of authority are buying into the Restorative Approaches theme. There needs to be encouragement and support for the different starting points and the differing levels of discretion the different actors have.

There may be different starting points such as:

- Whole School Approaches that often Principals themselves promote;
- Promoting relational cultures through informal meetings, engagements, corridor engagement and playground / sport field engagements;
- Restorative Circles, year groups and class groups that Year teachers and Departmental heads can develop and that respond to strained relationship cultures;
- Responses to growing tension or to specific incidents between pupils that often young teachers may be in the front line with.

It is important that such approaches are both affirmed and treated as starting points within a more general commitment to:

- Involve staff and other adults reflectively in what is an adult duty-to create a school culture where all involved work and meet together in an affirming, relational atmosphere;
- Ensure the attainment and development of pupils is as high as possible;
- Create safer school environments for all;
- Ensure that as many students as possible remain and are educated to their full potential.

## **i. Promote a Narrative Discourse Approach as the core of Restorative Practice Development**

From fieldwork, research and practical examples it would appear that an approach that allows diverse points of entry but which has a central coherence might best be approached through what some call a 'narrative discourse approach'.

In such an approach each one of us is shaped, for good or ill, by the quality of relationships we have been and are part of (Girard, 1978-2006). All relationships go through different times of ease, unease and even conflict. Children and young people grow through childhood and adolescence, often unconsciously, working out how to make and sustain good relationships. Regrettably many experience many difficulties in relationships that are often very strong in their lives.

Schools are places for learning about academic knowledge and learning about personal growth and development. For some young people the school may be the only relatively safe space in which to acknowledge and reflect on difficulties in relationships because:

- it is a statutory space,
- it is a place governed by health and safety procedures that guarantee them safety,
- it is a place staffed by professionals who work to a professional code of respect, fostering personal development and growth,
- it supports the growth of individual agency and individual voice.

In this discourse approach respectful relationships are understood to be central to maximising the impact of the school with pupils (Drewery, 2003). Relationships are key to developing integrity and dignity between all who participate in the school community.

## 6.SIGNIFICANT FORMATIVE OUTCOMES TO WORK TOWARDS IN 2011-2012

## 6. Significant formative outcomes to work towards in 2011-2012 now might be:

### SEPTEMBER 2011

#### 1. CREATING DEDICATED REFLECTIVE SPACE FOR THE PROGRAMME ANCHORS

The central activists in this programme should be invited at the beginning of Year 2 to take some time to nourish their thinking and understanding of their work and its restorative potential, with the Norfolk partners.

### OCTOBER 2011-APRIL 2012

#### 2. GENERATING CRITICAL REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER LEARNING CLUSTERS

There is a body of people who are loosely connected together from diverse institutions, practices and locations. They are using the language of restorative practices and they are developing considerable insights into how to implement some changes in their paid and voluntary practice. These experiences need to be affirmed.

The Comenius Co-ordinator should now be mandated to further empower and resource a number of 'learning clusters' that would meet on a regular basis and critically reflect on the learning they are distilling from the challenges of their practice.

Through establishing a number of self-motivated reflective 'learning clusters', perhaps with some local facilitation, they would, over a year, gather together and share their experience.

These experiences and insights will deliver significant understandings for this practitioner group as well as, collectively, distill significant learning points for the development of this practice locally, institutionally and beyond.

These 'learning clusters' would also bring them into a more comprehensive understanding of how their work belongs to a core set of generic restorative practices. The participants in these actions could present their experiences to the June 2012 conference as one set of Programme Outcomes.

#### 3. ANCHOR PRACTICES TO BE SHARED AT THE JUNE 2012 CONFERENCE

Drawing on this reflective practice these practitioner reflective groups would become the anchors in the structure of the June Conference.

### 4. POST JUNE 2012

Comenius Regio would seek ways to underpin forms of restorative practice that are:

Value Led, Best Practice challenged, Informed by Research, Underpinned by legal and policy drivers the different agencies are working to and whatever wider 'civic good-public well-being' assumptions the organisations are implicitly or explicitly working to.

That post the June Conference they then seek to establish and support a broader learning community approach that takes a systemic view for the development of restorative approaches, ideally informed by a 'narrative discourse' approach.

This narrative discourse approach: pays attention to the ways people speak with one another; calls people into relational ways of supporting one another and resolving misunderstandings and conflicts where they arise; builds interlinking structural and relational ways of promoting a systemic, whole organisation approach that holds all to account for their behaviour; and addresses behaviour as the problem not the people concerned.

Such a systemic approach seeks to acknowledge and address harm, where harm has occurred. It builds a more open relational way of working and a school or organisational culture that is future oriented and that sees each member of the community as gifts and assets.

Within such a wider vision a school or civil society organisation becomes both a learning community and an experience of what it means to belong to a more open, invitational, inclusive, just and shared society (see Pavlich).



## APPENDIX A: THE UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER'S 'BALANCED MODEL'



## Appendix A: The University of Ulster's 'Balanced Model'<sup>17</sup>

The University of Ulster's 'Balanced Model' Approach emphasises the critical importance of informed skilful practice. We are committed to a holistic model which meets the needs of victims, of people who commit offences and of the wider community people are part of.

This model examines the triangular relationships between the victims of crime, people who commit criminal offences and the wider community. It focuses on how these relationships affect the quality of each party's lives. The tension and interdependence between the three sides are what hold the triangle together and create the space within it.

### Premises for Restorative Justice

- The restorative justice process is based upon respect for the rights and equality of each individual, upon the value of the diversity and upon recognition of the interdependent nature of society.
- Crime damages relationships and causes harm to victims and those close to them, to the children and young people who offend and those close to them and to communities.
- Crime creates an obligation to make things right.
- Repairing harm and restoring relationships are the aims of restorative justice.
- Communities, children and young people who offend, and victims, if they wish, all have important contributions to make to an effective and just response to crime.
- The victim's perspective is critical to developing a plan to repair the harm caused by crime.
- Children and young people are enabled to take responsibility for their offending and for the action required both to repair the harm they have caused and to reduce the risk of their re-offending.
- The community provides for the well-being, safety, and inclusion of its members including both victims and the children and young people who offend.
- Victims and the children and young people who offend are members of communities.

*In developing our 'Restorative Approaches in Schools' modules at access and postgraduate levels we are critically examining how this model, developed within a criminal justice context, can be developed within the organisational structures of schools.*

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<sup>17</sup> Chapman, T J. & Campbell, H.A.

## APPENDIX B: A LENS OF COMPARATIVE BEST PRACTICE

Appendix B:A Lens of Comparative Best Practice

A Scottish Model

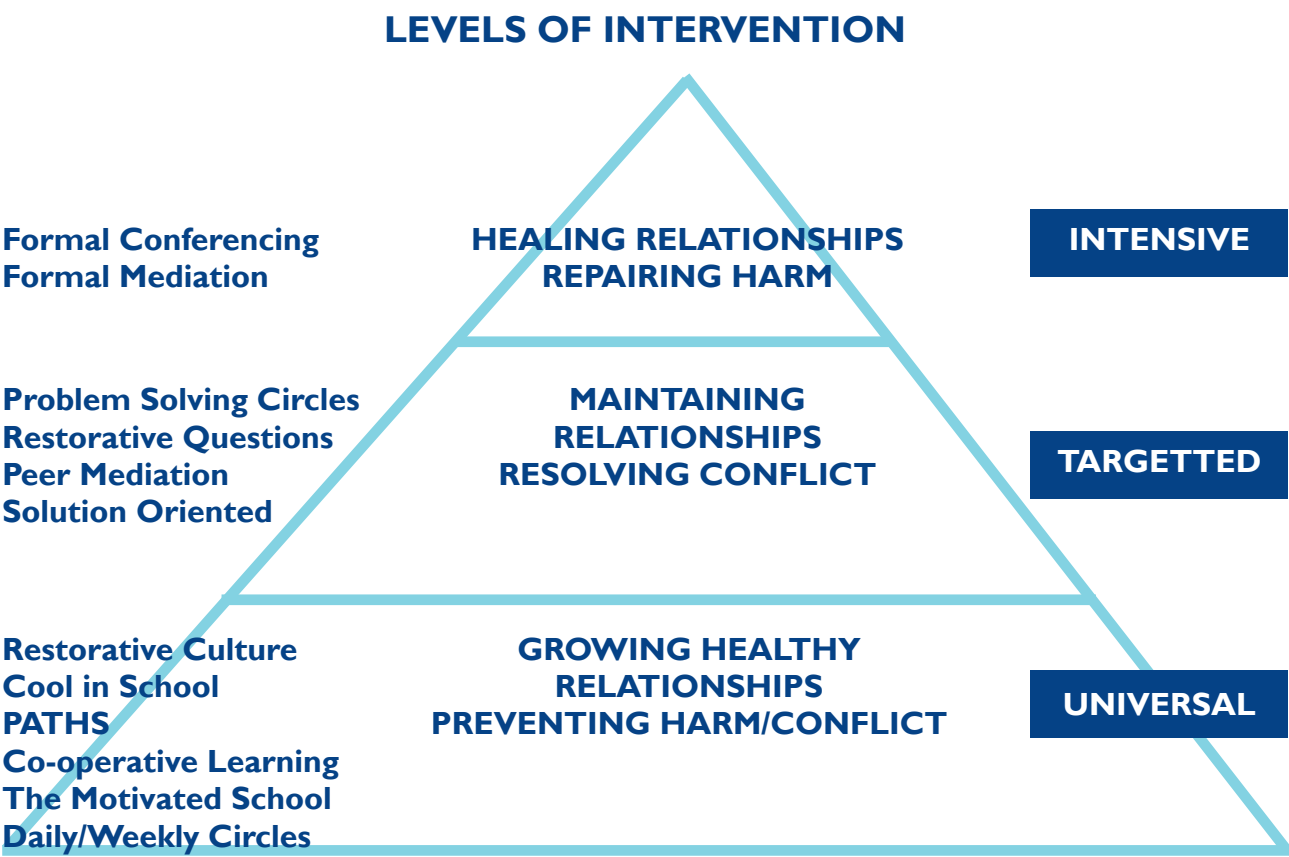


Fig 6: Brian Steel, Scottish Government Presentation, UUC, 15 June 2011.

## APPENDIX C: A LENS OF COMPARATIVE BEST PRACTICE

## Appendix C: A Lens of Comparative Best Practice

### The Lancashire Model

A further useful model that this wider parental and community support, community development work can be linked to is that developed by Helen Flanagan in Lancashire and the concept of three waves of practice<sup>18</sup>.

“There are phases that are involved in introducing restorative approaches into any school and these mirror the ‘waves’ approach used to introduce SEAL.”

#### Wave 1: Universal Entitlement

*Creating a Restorative Ethos: Whole school training, involving all members of staff to increase awareness and promote understanding of the philosophy, psychology and benefits of using restorative approaches.*

#### Wave 2: Nominated staff and pupils who will have a greater role in delivering restorative approaches

*Practical Application: Higher-level training, delivered to a small number of nominated staff who will use the approach to address incidents of low-level disruption or inappropriate behaviour. The staff involved in training at this level may have leadership responsibility in a department or pastoral team. Training will also include peer restorative teams or peer mediation which involves the training of pupils to support their peers in resolving low level issues, usually during lunch and break times. It is essential that the team of peer mediators is allocated a member of staff to support the work they do.*

**Wave 3:** Key staff, governors and parents with a role in delivering restorative interventions to address more serious incidents of inappropriate behaviour and support reintegration meetings, members of disciplinary committees and parents wishing to take a more proactive role in supporting behaviour and attendance in the school<sup>19</sup>.

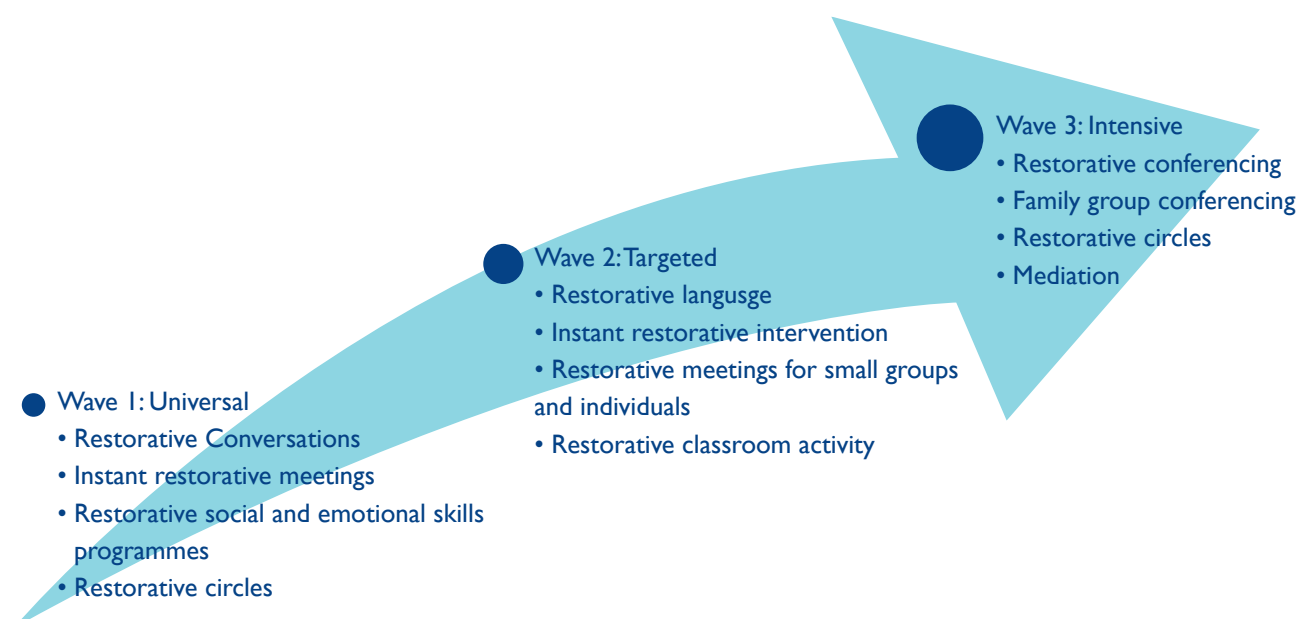


Fig 7: The Waves Approach- Restorative Approaches in Lancashire, Dr Helen Flanagan

<sup>18</sup> Restorative Approaches in Schools (RAiS), Flanagan, H., Lancashire County Council, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Restorative Approaches in Schools (RAiS), Flanagan, H., Lancashire County Council, 2010.

09

## FACULTY FOCUS

# RESTORING BALANCE



**PROFESSOR PAUL CARMICHAEL, DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, PROVIDES AN INSIGHT INTO THE NOVEL RESTORATIVE PRACTICES PROGRAMME AT ULSTER.**



## ACHIEVEMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Restorative Practices Programme (RPP) at Ulster is one of only two postgraduate courses of its kind in the UK and Island of Ireland. Pioneered by Dr Derrick Wilson, Reader; Hugh Campbell, Senior Lecturer; and Tim Chapman, Lecturer, this innovative course prepares students to practice skilfully and knowledgeably within the criminal justice system – including prisons, police, probation and youth justice – and in schools, social work, civil society, public institutions and youth and community services. Currently 160 students undertake aspects of the course.

## REPUTATION FOR EXCELLENCE

RPP draws upon the expertise and experience of Denis Bradley, Visiting Professor in Restorative Practices – and former Deputy Chair of the Policing Board and Co-Chair of The Group on Acknowledging the Past – and the support of external examiner, Professor Joanna Shapland, Professor of Criminal Law, University of Sheffield. The course is gaining a reputation for excellence and developing links within the European Union, North America and Australasia.

Key achievements of RPP to date include the successful Balanced Model, which engages the participation of offenders and has proven to reduce reoffending rates better than any other approach in Northern Ireland. It has been commended by 'Time for a Fresh Start' – an independent commission on youth crime and anti-social behaviour – and 'Making Amends', the prison reform trust. It has also been recommended as the adoption model in England and Wales and The European Forum for Restorative Justice is championing the model in the EU.

## ENGAGING IN LOCAL SOCIAL ISSUES

RPP is involved in delivering training to prison service staff on innovative restorative practices. As part of a review of the Northern Ireland Prison System (NIPS) research has been undertaken into the role of the prison officer including discussions among senior managers and stakeholders of NIPS. The findings have been presented to the prison review panel for consideration.

In working closely with a range of local community organisations, a series of relevant courses have been developed including youth development practices. A review of the youth justice system is currently taking place, and Ulster is also involved in the revision of the Youth Conference Practice Guidelines.

## ENHANCING SCHOOLS AND YOUTH PROVISION

RPP is developing teaching resources and learning approaches to support schools – and other children and youth providers – to promote more open and inclusive structures that support relationships and address conflict in relationships.

## FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Going forward, a key priority for RPP is the development of research partnerships that will enable agency staff to complete Master and Doctoral research theses. Other future research topics include young people suffering from paramilitary violence and the induction of prison education staff across a number of jurisdictions beyond Northern Ireland.

IMAGE: Staff from RPP on a partnership-developing visit to John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York



## A RESTORATIVE SCHOOL HAS BEEN VARIOUSLY DESCRIBED.

Elements of one perspective are

### A Restorative School:

- Bravely takes a new look at traditional processes of educating;
- The centrality of judgment, deficit and failure is replaced by appreciation, alternative possibilities and hope;
- Issues are addressed rather than students punished;
- Teachers see themselves in relation with their students and their parent, not as authorities over them.
- When disciplinary offences occur, the focus is on restoring relationship rather than restoring authority.
- The spirit or being of each student is maintained and grown.
- The school community is committed to the integrity of all its members.
- People speak respectfully of one another, including teachers, students and their families, recognising that all families want success for their children.
- Teachers and students look forward to the challenges they meet at school.
- The voice of every student is heard rather than drowned out by the weight of the loudest or weightiest.
- Excellence is sought in respectful relationship.
- Ensuring that everyone belongs to the school community is valued more than offering privileges to a few.
- Hospitality is extended to parents and visitors.
- The communities of care around the school and its students becomes very visible.
- Students learn that living in a complex community is not only possible, but enjoyable.
- There are significantly fewer referrals to the Head teacher for bad behaviour.
- School achievement soars.
- We remember what we are here for in this school every day.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Drewery, W. 2004, Restorative Practices for Schools: A Resource., 1st edn, School of Education, University of Waikato., Hamilton, N.Z.



